

THE FRONTIER SERIES



TROOPER *with* CUSTER

E. A. BRININSTOOL

GLENDALÉ CALIF. PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9010 00973430 6

NO LONGER PROPERTY OF
GLENDALÉ LIBRARY,
ARTS & CULTURE DEPT.

8C Collection

ASK AT DESK

GLENDALÉ
PUBLIC LIBRARY

REFERENCE

R78

978

B

Brinistool, E.

A trooper with
Custer

C.2

8C Collection
ASK AT DESK

Not to be taken from
the Library

U-53

INV. 7

To my very dear Friend

Mrs. Mary A. Graham

With kindest regards and
happiest Christmas greetings.

E. A. Brimistock.

Dec. 25/25.



Sincerely yours.
E. A. Brininstool

"THE FRONTIER SERIES."

A Trooper With Custer

And Other Historic Incidents of the Battle of
the Little Big Horn.

— By —

E. A. BRININSTOOL

(Honorary Companion "Order of Indian Wars;")

Author: "Trail Dust of a Maverick;" Co-
author "The Bozeman Trail.")

VOL. I.

R
978
B
C. R.

THE HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER CO.

Columbus, Ohio, U. S. A.

1925.

Copyrighted, 1925

By

THE HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER CO.

Columbus, Ohio

All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

To that under-paid, overworked, yet ever-dutiful body of men who paved the way for the advance of civilization through a land whose every inch was contested by the Red Man of the Plains — the men who marched, fought, bled and suffered, yet who now, in their old age, are neglected by the very government they defended — the Indian Wars Veterans.

A TROOPER WITH CUSTER

PREFACE

THERE is no fiction in the contents of this little volume; no lurid tales of adventure with a historical setting against a background of make-believe, such as is found on the magazine stands of today. Personally, I believe such stories do far more damage than good; they are entirely misleading to thousands of readers, and are very apt to give the rising generation a decidedly wrong impression and conception of the old-time West, and of the breed of men who composed the population of our isolated army posts and frontier settlements in the days of the wild Indian and the buffalo.

The stories contained herein are all of actual happenings and actual participants; there are no fictitious names, no colored circumstances. They are a part of the real history of the West, and for that reason I am not ashamed to place this little volume in the hands of any interested boy or girl, youth or elderly person, who may desire to know the truth about one of the leading Indian battles, and other important frontier happenings pertaining thereto, and the men who played leading parts therein. Every character mentioned in each chapter was a living, breathing person, and every incident related in this book can be vouched for and verified.

There has been altogether too much "bunk" written around the history of the West. Many writers

have drawn on their imaginations to such an extent (and the "movies" have aided them) and have so distorted and twisted certain historical happenings, that any attempt to straighten them out and relate the TRUTH, is almost certain to meet with much opposition. Nevertheless, the writer intends to "hew to the line, let the chips fall where they may."

The Indian has been held before the young people of this country as a bloodthirsty, murderous, sneaking devil, always lying in wait for scalps, not to be trusted, and only good when dead. But the Indian was only what Uncle Sam himself made him in that respect. While the Indian is belittled, scarcely anything is said about the political parasites at Washington and elsewhere, who robbed, cheated, tricked, swindled, defrauded, deceived and imposed upon the red man at every turn.

Had Uncle Sam raised a few more thousand William Penns, the Indian would have had no excuse for taking to the warpath in retaliation for the wrongs inflicted upon him. The Indian never was bad until first made bad by his white brother, through his villainous whisky and still more villainous trickery and chicanery. Contact with the white race was the real undoing of the red man. The only wonder is that the Indian was not ten times worse than he really was, considering his unjust treatment by unscrupulous whites. He had every reason for going to the bad.

I believe that every old regular army man, in spite of what he may have received at the hands of the Indian, will agree with me in the foregoing assertion. There were too many dishonest, unprincipled

Indian agents who did more to keep the regular army man out in the field, jeopardizing his life, than the great American public of this day realizes. And today, thousands of old Indian fighters will testify that the government for which they fought is now giving them just about as contemptible treatment, in their plea for pension increases, in this year of our Lord, 1925, as that same government gave to the Indian for the twenty-five years following the Civil War.

The contents of this first volume of the "Frontier Series" touch upon different happenings in connection with the battle of the Little Big Horn. I have not attempted, in this small volume, to go into the full details of the Custer fight, but only to relate some interesting side lights of the battle. These articles first appeared in the HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER, but so great has been the demand for extra copies which could not, in many instances, be supplied, that it was considered advisable to gather them into one volume for the information and study of those interested in Custer's last campaign.

If these various chapters shall enlighten the reader in any manner on the last ill-fated expedition of the Seventh Cavalry, the author shall feel repaid for his hard work in gathering the actual facts.

E. A. BRININSTOOL.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I — A TROOPER WITH CUSTER.....	17
II — WITH RENO AT THE LITTLE BIG HORN.....	57
III — WAS MAJOR MARCUS A. RENO A COWARD?.....	92
IV — THE STORY OF TRUMPETER MARTIN.....	125
V — TWO MODEST HEROES OF THE CUSTER EXPEDITION.	139
VI — WAS THERE A CUSTER SURVIVOR?.....	150
VII — A GREAT NEWSPAPER "SCOOP".....	158
VIII — HOW THE CUSTER BATTLEFIELD WAS DISCOVERED.	166
IX — THE CUSTER BATTLE HEROES.....	175
X — THE STORY OF "COMANCHE".....	185
XI — CHARLEY REYNOLDS, CUSTER'S CHIEF OF SCOUTS	191

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Frontispiece — E. A. Brininstool.....	2
General George A. Custer.....	19
Capt. Thos. M'Dougal.....	24
Capt. Thomas H. French.....	28
Fort Abraham Lincoln.....	32
Wm. C. Slaper in 1876.....	36
Wm. C. Slaper in 1925.....	40
West Face of Custer Monument.....	44
John Burkman, Custer's "Striker".....	48
Emanuel H. Custer.....	52
Valley of the Little Big Horn.....	56
Sergt. Thomas O'Neill.....	61
Fred F. Girard, Interpreter.....	66
Lieut. Chas C. DeRudio.....	71
Lieut. Chas. A. Varnum.....	77
Billy Jackson, Halfbreed Scout.....	84
Scene of Reno's First Engagement.....	91
Grave of Lieut. Donald M'Intosh.....	95
Capt. F. W. Benteen.....	98
Reno's Crossing, Little Big Horn River.....	102
"Curley," One of Custer's Crow Indian Scouts.....	105
Major Marcus A. Reno.....	108
"White-Man-Runs-Him," Crow Indian Scout.....	111
"Mitch" Bouy��r, Celebrated Halfbreed Scout.....	115
One of Custer's Crow Indian Scouts.....	118
Sitting Bull, the Great Sioux Medicine Man.....	121
Trumpeter John Martin.....	126
Crow King — Prominent Sioux Leader.....	129
Scenes of Custer's Last Stand.....	131
Crazy Horse, A Leading Hostile Sioux Chief.....	133
Survivors Who Fought With Reno.....	135
Headstone Over Spot Where Custer Fell.....	138
Dr. H. R. Porter.....	142
Capt. Grant Marsh, Commander of the "Far West"....	146

	PAGE
Steamer "Far West".....	149
General E. S. Godfrey.....	152
General George A. Custer.....	155
General Custer from a War Time Photo.....	160
"Rain-in-the-Face," a Leading Sioux Chief.....	163
Lieut. James H. Bradley.....	168
Gall, Prominent Sioux War Chief.....	171
The Congressional Medal of Honor.....	179
"Comanche," the Horse Ridden by Capt. Keogh.....	187
Charley Reynolds as a Young Man.....	193
Charley Reynolds, Custer's Chief of Scouts.....	199
Sitting Bull, Noted Sioux Medicine Man.....	205

CHAPTER I

A TROOPER WITH CUSTER

THE THRILLING EXPERIENCE OF TROOPER WILLIAM C.
SLAPER, M COMPANY, SEVENTH CAVALRY, IN
THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN.

AUTHOR'S NOTE — In the following thrilling account of the battle of the Little Big Horn, or "Custer's Last Fight", as it is commonly known, William C. Slaper, Los Angeles, California, formerly of Troop M, Seventh Cavalry, under command of Capt. Thos. H. French, (which troop fought with Major Reno's battalion) recounts his own personal experiences in this greatest of Indian battles upon the American continent. Mr. Slaper's story can be depended upon as absolutely reliable and accurate insofar as what came under his own personal observation is concerned. No two men would likely have witnessed things exactly similar under the exciting conditions which existed on the occasion of the Little Big Horn fight. Mr. Slaper's escape from an awful death was miraculous, and his story is the clear, concise truth of a private in the ranks.

I WAS born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, November 23, 1855, working there at various employments until I attained my twentieth year. Early in September, 1875, I found myself out of a job, and while walking along the street, wondering what I had better try next in the work line, I observed the sign, "Men Wanted", in front of the United States Army Recruiting station. Although I had passed that sign numberless times before, it never held any attraction for me until that morning.

I stopped and read it. Then I wondered if they would take me as a soldier. Half-heartedly I went upstairs to the office, almost hoping I would be rejected. I told the recruiting officer what I was after. He asked me many questions, and finally I was requested to disrobe for a physical examination. This examination was a very rigid one, because out of ten applicants that morning, but two were accepted, I being one of them.

There and then I took an oath to serve Uncle Sam to the best of my ability, for the regal sum of \$13 a month "and found". The \$13 were always forthcoming, but the "found" part I often found wanting. At that time, any young man wearing the uniform of a United States soldier was looked upon as an idler—too lazy to work. Being in my own home town, and well known, I felt somewhat ashamed of being seen in my uniform.

I had a sweetheart, of course, and naturally wanted to see her, although I remained indoors most of the time. However, as the time of my departure drew near, I ventured forth one afternoon to pay her a visit. I thought by making use of back alleys and unfrequented streets, I might reach her home undetected; but someone who knew me reported it at my home, and this brought my older brother down the following morning to investigate the matter, and, as he said, "to get me out of the army." As I was under age, it was lucky for me that I managed to get my brother's ear before he reached the recruiting office. I took him to the room I had been occupying, and told him if he "gave me away" they could send me to prison for two years for making a false statement regarding my age. He finally con-



GEN'L. GEO. A. CUSTER, 7TH CAVALRY. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CENTURY CO.

cluded to let me go ahead, but first commanded me to go home and see my mother, as she knew where I was and wanted to see me.

I found she had met with an accident whereby she had broken her arm in two places. When she saw me in army uniform, she fainted. That was too much for me! Kissing her, I rushed from the house, leaving my mother in the care of my sister. Mother had a dread of war—and with good reason. My father, my mother's brother, her brother-in-law and a cousin all lost their lives during the first year of the Civil War. It had made life hard for her, as there were five of us children. Doubtless she feared that I never would come back home to her again—but I did, after five years' service. Mother lived only three months after my return, however.

A few days later, twenty of us recruits were sent to Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis. Here we remained about six weeks, where we were instructed in the dismounted drill, and given some preliminary training at stables. We were taught how to groom a horse in regulation style, by a crusty old sergeant named "Bully" Welch, a character whom all old cavalrymen of that day will remember.

Then came an order for several recruits to be sent to join the Fifth Cavalry. Many of the twenty young fellows who had come to St. Louis with me, were taken. Soon after this, three or four of us were selected to become troopers in the Seventh Cavalry. General Sam Sturgis was then at St. Louis on recruiting service, and commanded Jefferson Barracks. He was also in command of the Seventh Cavalry, and his son, Jack, who had gradu-

ated from West Point, was there with him. Jack was appointed a second lieutenant in the Seventh, and was to accompany the recruits. I well remember when we were all in line to receive our instructions, Gen. Sturgis told us he was going to send his son with us to the Seventh Cavalry, and for us to take good care of him — which we gladly promised to do. Poor Jack! His service was a short one after that. He was killed with Custer's command in the Little Big Horn fight, and his body was one of those never found — at least, not recognized, when we buried the dead.

Both Lieut. Sturgis and I were assigned to M Company. We left St. Louis in good marching order, our destination being Fort Abraham Lincoln, near Bismarck, Dakota, on the Missouri River, then headquarters for the Seventh Cavalry.

A little incident that took place en route will perhaps amuse the reader. While stopping for coffee and something to eat at Fargo, Dakota, we had about two hours to wait. An Irish sergeant in charge of our car — seemingly an old veteran — instructed a bunch of recruits to go to a certain saloon not far from the station, take their canteens and guns, and pawn or trade the weapons for liquor, and to bring the liquor back in their canteens. On their return with the whisky, he then took a squad of recruits, armed them as guards and marched them over to the saloon. Here he threatened the proprietor for buying government arms, and immediately confiscated the pawned weapons! He thus secured plenty of whisky at no expense. I thought myself that it was a pretty clever trick. Needless to say that from Fargo to Bismarck that

night, the sergeant's car contained a bunch of noisy and hilarious troopers. However, we reached Bismarck in good shape, where we were ferried over the Missouri River to Fort Lincoln.

Here were six companies of the Seventh Cavalry stationed. We fresh recruits were lined up and assigned to our respective companies, I being, as stated previously, assigned to M Troop, which had just got in from a scout. A day or so later we were started for Fort Rice. Here we passed an uneventful winter, and here I got a taste of real cold weather, the thermometer often reaching 40 degrees below zero. I remember that among other duties, we cut ice and filled the big ice house—later to be enjoyed by the infantry who were sent to guard the fort, while we of the cavalry were out campaigning on the hot, dry, dusty plains, drinking alkali water.

When spring arrived, we were ordered back to Fort Lincoln, where we went into camp, having received instructions to make ready to join the expedition to be sent out against Sitting Bull and his hostile warriors of the Sioux nation, who were then leaving their reservations in large numbers, and committing all sorts of depredations. There were many sub-tribes of the Sioux who "jumped" their reservations with their families and plenty of extra ponies, all heading to meet at a general rendezvous, later found to be established along the Little Big Horn River, in the territory of Montana.

Some months previously, Capt. Tom Custer, brother of the general, had been sent to Standing Rock Agency, on the Missouri River, about 40 miles below Fort Rice. The object of his trip was to ar-

rest an Indian named Rain-in-the-Face, who was wanted for the murder of Dr. Honzinger, an army veterinarian, and a Mr. Ballaran, an army post sutler, who had strayed from their command. After some hazardous maneuvers, Capt. Custer, through the assistance of Charley Reynolds, General Custer's chief of scouts, secured the Indian, and took him to Fort Lincoln, where he was placed in the guardhouse. One night, several prisoners broke out, among them being Rain-in-the-Face, who immediately joined the hostiles and swore eternal vengeance against Capt. Tom Custer.

It was on the 17th day of May, 1876, that my regiment left Fort Abraham Lincoln. Gen. Alfred H. Terry was the commanding officer of the entire expedition, but the Seventh Cavalry itself was under the immediate command of General Custer. It was said to be the best equipped regiment as to horses, men and accoutrements, that Uncle Sam had ever turned out. Custer was known to be very strong for getting only the best in horses and men, and for securing all the conveniences which that early day afforded. There was little enough in the way of comfort at that time on the then unsettled plains of the northwest.

Being only a "kid" at the time, I paid but little attention to passing events, such as keeping a diary, as some of the older men did, so at this distant day I am unable to give dates, names of camping places, etc., as readily as I would wish. I was only in the "shavetail" class, having had no real experience in roughing it, much less of Indian fighting. But I was destined to get my full share ere another six weeks had passed.



CAPT. THOS. M'DOUGAL, 7TH CAVALRY, IN
CHARGE OF THE PACK TRAIN, JUNE 25,
1876. PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.

The first day's march was a very lengthy one, and we camped on Little Heart River. There was some excitement on this first day's march, as some of the horses were very unruly and hard to manage after their long winter's rest; and having been well fed, they were ready to "go". In camp that night, there was more excitement. The prairie all about us was on fire, and we were kept busy fighting the flames to prevent their spreading through the camp. However, it did but little damage, and we shortly thereafter had a chance to rest.

All went well until June 1, when we were in the Bad Lands of the Little Missouri. Retiring as usual that night, we were surprised the following morning to discover that we had been snowed in. We were using "pup" tents, two men to the tent, which left but little room for anything else. It turned very cold, and was mighty uncomfortable for both men and horses; but we passed through it with no great harm being done.

Nothing worth special mention occurred thereafter until we reached Powder River. Attached to the expedition were four companies of the Second Cavalry, some artillery and some infantry. At the Powder River, our wagons were all sent back. Our sabers were also here boxed and returned; no one, not even an officer, retaining this weapon. The regimental band also was sent back. Thereafter pack mules carried the rations, extra ammunition and supplies of whatever nature were taken along. Some scouting was done from here, and taken altogether, it looked very much as if trouble would loom on the horizon ere long. Rumors of all sorts

were floating about the camp, but nothing official was reported.

On June 22d, we left our Powder River camp. General Terry had tendered Custer the use of four companies of the Second Cavalry, but they were declined, Custer remarking that he could whip any Indian village on the Plains with his own regiment, and that extra troops would simply be a burden. He also declined the tender of the Gatling guns.

Nothing of special interest occurred on the 22d. the march being but a short one, probably of twelve or fifteen miles. The next day we marched about thirty miles (as I recollect) and the following day about the same; but at some hour in the night we were called out and made ready to make a night march. This has always been a puzzle to me, since it was given out that we were to meet General Terry in the neighborhood of the Big Horn River, with the balance of his command on the morning of June 27th. I do not claim to know what orders General Custer had from General Terry about this, save from the written instructions given Custer by Terry, which are now public and which doubtless every student of the Custer fight has read. It seemed to be the general understanding among the men that Custer and Terry were understood to have agreed to meet somewhere in the valley of the Little Big Horn on June 27th.

This forced night march had much to do with the worn condition of our horses during the battle of the Little Big Horn. The grazing had been poor for several days, and as we were traveling in light marching order—that is, without wagons—there was little, if any, grain for our horses.

As I recall, it was about daylight when we halted and made coffee. I remember this very distinctly, because I did not get any of the coffee, having dropped down under a tree and fallen asleep, holding to the bridle-rein of my horse, and I did not awaken until called to fall into line. We did not unsaddle at this halt, so the animals secured but little rest.

This was on the fateful morning of June 25th, when so much was destined to happen. We all knew that we were on a hot Indian trail, and likely to run into the savages at any moment. Excitement began to grow, and every move was watched with curiosity and intense eagerness. Throughout the morning we were traveling quite rapidly. Toward noon there was a halt, and General Custer called his officers together and gave them their instructions. It so happened that my company, M, under Capt. Thomas French, Company A, under Captain Moylan, and Company G, under Captain Wallace, were elected to go under the command of Major Marcus A. Reno. Of course we did not know at that time what General Custer's plans were, or how many companies he took with him, but later learned that Companies C, E, I, F and L were under his immediate command, and Captain Benteen was given Companies H, K and D, while Company B was to guard the pack-train, under the command of Captain McDougal.

As I recall it, it was Benteen and his command which started on to the left. General Custer and his command went straight ahead along the little tributary of the Little Big Horn River, but on the



CAPT. THOMAS H. FRENCH, COMMANDING
TROOP M, 7TH CAVALRY IN THE LITTLE
BIG HORN FIGHT.

right bank of the stream, while Reno and his command marched parallel to Custer on the left bank.

Soon after this, Adjutant Cook came direct to Reno from Custer with some instructions. Then we took a rather sharp angle to the left, and things began to liven up. We were then trotting our horses and going down a long hillside which took us to the Little Big Horn River, which we crossed. I believe it was Company M which had the advance and was the first to ford the river, Company A following, with G Company in the rear.

Soon commenced the rattle of rifle fire, and bullets began to whistle about us. I remember that I ducked my head and tried to dodge bullets which I could hear whizzing through the air. This was my first experience under fire. I know that for a time I was frightened, and far more so when I got my first glimpse of the Indians riding about in all directions, firing at us and yelling and whooping like incarnate fiends, all seemingly as naked as the day they were born, and painted from head to foot in the most hideous manner imaginable.

We were soon across the stream, through a strip of timber and out into the open, where our captain ordered us to dismount and prepare to fight on foot. Number Fours were ordered to hold the horses, while Numbers One, Two and Three started for the firing line.

Our horses were scenting danger before we dismounted, and several at this point became unmanageable and started straight for the open among the Indians, carrying their helpless riders with them. One of the boys, a young fellow named

Smith, of Boston, we never saw again, either dead or alive.

In forming the firing line we deployed to the left. By this time the Indians were coming in closer and in increasing numbers, circling about and raising such a dust that a great many of them had a chance to get in our rear under cover of it — where we found them on our retreat!

It was on this line that I saw the first one of my own company comrades fall. This was Sergeant O'Hara. Then I observed another, and yet another. Strange to say, I had recovered from my first fright, and had no further thought of fear, although conscious that I was in great peril and standing a mighty good chance of never getting out of it alive.

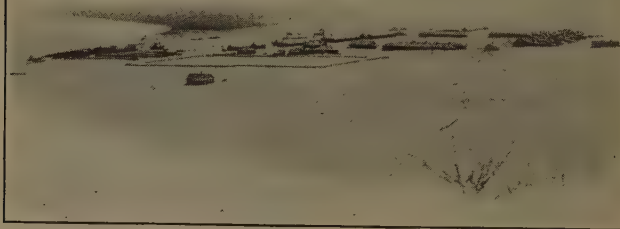
The Indians were now increasing in such hordes and pouring such a hot fire into our small command, that it was getting to be a decidedly unhealthy neighborhood for Reno's command. In a short time word came to retreat back to the horses in the timber. We got back there about as quickly as we knew how. In this excitement, some of the horseholders released their animals before the riders arrived, and consequently they were "placed afoot" which made it exceedingly critical for them. It was said that before Reno gave the order to mount and retreat, he rode up to Capt. French and shouted, "Well, Tom, what do you think of this?" Capt. French replied, "I think we had better get out of here." Reno thereupon gave the order, although I did not hear it. Neither did I hear any bugle calls or other orders or commands of any sort. I could hear nothing but the continual roar of Indian rifles and the

sharp, resonant bang-bang of cavalry carbines, mingled with the whoops of the savages and the shouts of my comrades.

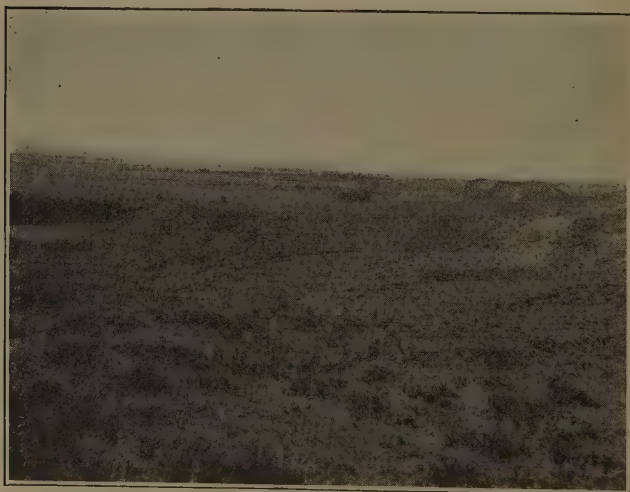
When I got to my horse there were not many of us left in the timber that I could see. Soon after, Private Henry Koltzbucher who was "striker" for Capt. French, was shot through the stomach, just as he was in the act of mounting his horse. He fell to the ground, and I saw Private Francis Neely dismount to help him. I thereupon got off my own horse and helped Neely drag the wounded trooper into a clump of heavy underbrush, where we thought he might not be found by the Indians. Wm. E. Morris, another comrade, came up at this juncture and helped us care for Koltzbucher. We saw that he was probably mortally wounded, so we left him a canteen of water and hurriedly mounted again, dashing toward the river in the wake of our flying trooper comrades. After the battle we found the body of Koltzbucher where we had dragged him. He was not mutilated, and consequently had not been discovered by the Indians or their squaws in their fiendish work of killing and mutilating our comrades who had been helplessly wounded in the river bottom.

I cannot say that the retreat from the river bottom — and further on — had a very military appearance, but I can say that I saw nothing disorderly about it, although so many had gone on ahead of me and were so far in advance that what they did, or in what order they retreated, I cannot say with positive certainty. I did not strike the river at the regular ford, so was compelled to jump my horse into the stream at a point where the bank

Fort Abraham Lincoln, N. Dakota. This post was
 Custer's station from 1873 until May 17, 1876, when he left
 on the Big Horn and Yellowstone expeditions, never to return.
 The fort was abandoned in 1891. Photo taken in 1896.



FORT ABRAHAM LINCOLN. PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.



LOOKING DOWN LITTLE BIG HORN VALLEY (NORTH) FROM RENO'S
 ENTRENCHMENTS. PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

was about six or eight feet high. My animal nearly lost his footing when he struck the water. As I glanced about me, the first thing that engaged my attention was Trumpeter Henry Fisher of M Troop, riding in the river some distance up, with Lieut. Benny Hodgson hanging to one stirrup. Hodgson had been wounded and was on foot in the stream, when Fisher came dashing into the water. Noting Hodgson's helpless condition, he thrust one of his stirrups toward him, which Hodgson grasped and was thus towed across to the opposite bank, under a galling fire from the Indians, who were now riding into the stream, shooting into the ranks of the stampeding troopers, and actually pulling many of them from their horses right there in the river. As Fisher gained the opposite bank, dragging Hodgson at the end of his stirrup, and the latter was trying to struggle up the incline, another shot rang out and Hodgson dropped. I did not see him move again, and suppose he was killed right there.

My own position was decidedly precarious. As I urged my horse through the water I could see Indians in swarms about the ford above me, and many lashing their ponies to reach that spot, paying no attention to me. One reason for this was that I was alone, and they were doubtless looking for bigger game. Bullets were cutting the air all about me, however, as there were Indians on both banks, as well as in the water, fighting hand-to-hand with the troopers. Death seemed to ride on every hand, and yet a kind Providence must have been watching over me, for I crossed the stream unscathed. It was at the ford crossing where many of the men met their death, but in the retreat to the river and

the climb up the steep bluffs on the opposite side, some twenty-nine troopers were killed.

I believe one reason why so many of the men escaped was because of the intense dust which was raised by the horses and ponies of the combatants. It hung in dense clouds, and it was almost impossible to see fifty feet ahead in any direction. With fully twenty-five hundred or three thousand Indians racing their ponies about through that dust-laden plain, one can understand better the explanation of the situation.

After getting across the river, I had the steep bluffs to climb. These were so very abrupt that many of the already-wearied horses were unable to carry their riders to the top, and many of the men had to dismount and lead their exhausted animals, all the time being under a murderous fire from the Indians hidden in the brush along the river. On the way up I passed the body of Dr. De Wolf, one of our surgeons, who had been shot and killed while trying to gain the top.

I arrived at the crest of the hill without even a scratch. Here I came upon Captain French with about twenty of the men, and I joined them. Capt. French was as "cool as a cucumber" throughout the entire battle, and although I searched his face carefully for any sign of fear, it was not there. He had such perfect self-control that I had to admire his courage and bravery, and was indeed glad to be under his leadership. I was, however, considerably worried about the rest of the command, and where Custer was and why he had failed to support us as he had promised to do. It looked to me as if we would be wiped out before any assistance arrived,

as the Indians were now swarming up the bluffs after us, seeking places of advantage where they could completely surround us.

It was not long before Capt. Benteen was seen coming our way. I did not know where he had been or what he had been doing with his three companies, but I do know that they did not show the wear and tear of the Reno "remains". Had Reno not made that move out of the river bottom when he did — just in the nick of time — we could all have fared the fate of Custer and his men, without any assistance from any one. Even yet, I cannot understand why Benteen was not at hand where he could have assisted Reno in the fight in the river bottom. Of course he had his orders, but what they were I do not know. But after he joined us on the hill, we shortly thereafter all mounted and started in the direction that Custer was supposed to have gone. But we did not get very far. The Sioux had such a countless horde of warriors there, and they met our advance with such a staggering fire, that we were compelled to turn about and retreat to our first position on the hill. Even here, we were not in a protected position. There were higher ridges than the one we were on, which were immediately occupied by Indian sharpshooters, who poured heavy volleys down upon us.

However, we were in the best position we were able to get in the limited time at hand. Here we laid out a hospital, with the horses staked around the outside. We then formed in line of battle outside the horses, and the fighting commenced with renewed vigor on both sides. We were ordered to lie flat on our stomachs and stay down, and not to ex-



WM. C. SLAPER, IN 1876, AS A TROOPER WITH CUSTER.

pose ourselves, for the least sight of any portion of the body was the signal for a volley from the Indians. It was not long before we were carrying more wounded men to this improvised hospital.

There were many redskins on the higher hills which our short-barreled carbines could not reach. Finally our first sergeant joined the line at this point. He carried a special make of rifle — his own private weapon, and with it was enabled to throw bullets into the midst of the Indians there, and he soon silenced their fire. While in this line, Capt. French was about in the center, giving orders as coolly as though it was a Sunday school picnic. He would sit up tailor-style, while bullets were coming from the front and both sides. I could but marvel that he was not hit. Without appearing to be in the least excited, he would extract shells from guns in which cartridges would stick, and pass them loaded, then fix another, all the time watching in every direction.

We were not very well entrenched, as I recall that I used my butcher knife to cut the earth loose and throw a mound of it in front of me upon which to rest my carbine. At one time a bullet struck the corner of this mound, throwing so much dirt into my eyes that I could scarcely see for an hour or more. That same afternoon while lying face down on the ground, a bullet tore off the heel of my left boot as effectually as though it had been sawed off! That was as close as the Indians ever got to me, but I saw many of my comrades who fared worse.

With all the sad happenings in that hell-hole, there were yet some amusing incidents. In my company was a young fellow known as "Happy

Jack", because of his jovial disposition. During all that leaden hail that fell about us, I could hear "Happy's" hearty laugh ring out at a distance, although I could not imagine the cause of it, as I didn't see anything to laugh at; but it cheered me and made me feel a bit braver. Another time I was helping drag a wounded comrade into the hospital. We were compelled to drag him because we dared not expose ourselves. On the way back we started to walk out from the hospital site, instead of creeping out. My comrade had just reached the horse line when a bullet struck him behind the ear. Fortunately it was merely a glancing shot, passing through his ear. He tumbled to the ground and rolled over and over until I had a chance to examine him and assure him he was not seriously hurt.

I had only just returned to my position on the firing line when the man next to me was shot through the shoulder and disabled.

The firing was very heavy all through the afternoon of the 25th, and continued until dusk, which was about 9 o'clock in that region at that time of year. After that, we had a little respite, and took occasion to strengthen our defenses and make better breastworks. At peep of day on the 26th, the fighting again commenced with renewed vigor. Just about daylight a stray pack-animal with the pack yet on its back, wandered past our line, and in order to relieve the poor beast of its burden, two troopers and myself arose to our feet. Having done some packing, I was quite handy in untying the ropes, but we had only just started when some Indians caught sight of us and gave us a volley. A stray shot cut off the corner of a hardtack

box in the pack. We managed to get the pack loose, but did nothing more, getting back to our places on the line as quickly as possible. These were the first shots fired on the morning of the 26th, which was another busy day all around for both troopers and Indians. We had been kept awake the night before by Major Reno and other officers who walked about among us to see that none were asleep. It was a hard task to refrain from dropping off, after the excitement of the previous day, but we had little chance to relax.

When the ball opened on the 26th, Dr. Porter, who was the only surviving surgeon of the entire command, came up and said that the wounded were crying for water and ought to have it. Volunteers were called for to venture to the river. This was extremely hazardous, as the Indians were occupying the brush along the opposite bank of the stream and commanded every approach to the water. I did not go out with the first detachment sent for this purpose, but did with the second. We had to creep cautiously down the hill through a coulee until we arrived at its mouth where it debouched into the river. It was about thirty feet from the mouth of the coulee, and we had to cover this thirty feet entirely exposed to Indian bullets at short range, fill the canteens or camp kettles from the stream, and go back again under fire. When the first squad went out, nobody had the forethought to post a bunch of good shots at a point where they could fire volleys into the brush to silence the fire of the Indians; but when my detachment went for water, several expert riflemen were instructed to fire volleys into the brush while we were getting the



WM. C. SLAPER IN 1925. PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

water and running back into the coulee. In spite of this, an Indian managed to put a hole through the camp kettle I carried, so that I lost a good amount of the water. However, after several attempts, we managed to fill all the vessels and get back to the hospital, where it is needless to say the water was a God-send.

I have read in Capt. Godfrey's account of these water volunteers that all the men were rewarded with medals of honor by Congress. I never received any such medal, nor do I think any other man did. If so, I never heard of it.

In our venture to the stream, we found Trooper Mike Madden lying in the coulee, shot through the ankle. Mike was a big husky fellow and had accompanied the first detachment. He lost his leg in the hospital, where it was amputated. An amusing incident happened in connection with it. Before amputating the member, the surgeon gave Mike a stiff horn of brandy to brace him up. Mike went through the ordeal without a whimper, and was then given another drink. Smacking his lips in appreciation, he whispered to the surgeon:

"Docther, cut off me other leg!"

Later on, Mike was employed in the harness depot of the department at St. Paul.

I had made the trip for water with a young comrade named Jim Weeks. On our way back, Jim was hailed by Capt. Moylan, requesting a drink. I was surprised to hear Jim blurt out, "You go to hell and get your own water; this is for the wounded." Nothing more was said, but I know that must have been a hard pill for Moylan to swallow.

After carrying the water to the hospital we returned to our places on the firing line. I had just laid down when the man on my left (Henry Rutten) was shot through the shoulder. And thus it went for the balance of the day, with Capt. French still sitting up tailor-style, superintending the firing and defying the Indian bullets without flinching once. I was no longer frightened, in spite of the fact that there seemed no chance of our getting out alive, surrounded as we were by thousands of Indians far better armed than ourselves, and outnumbered a hundred to one.

I must say that I had to admire Major Reno during the entire fighting on the hill. I also saw him twice in the river bottom, and he did not seem to be at all ruffled. To a man in such a responsible position it must have been a trying time, without the support in sight which Custer had promised him. Our ammunition had been nearly exhausted during the fighting in the bottom, and had we not retreated to the hill, we certainly would have been wiped out in a very few minutes.

I observed Reno several times during the fighting on the bluffs, and can well remember his walking about among the men through the night. He would tap a man with his boot and remark, "Don't go to sleep, boys." I cannot understand why he was not shot down while walking about, as none of the troopers were able to make a move without drawing the fire of the Indians. I know it encouraged his fellow-officers as well as the troopers. I have read articles pertaining to this part of the battle of the Little Big Horn in which it was stated that Reno was drunk. This I brand as a lie. At

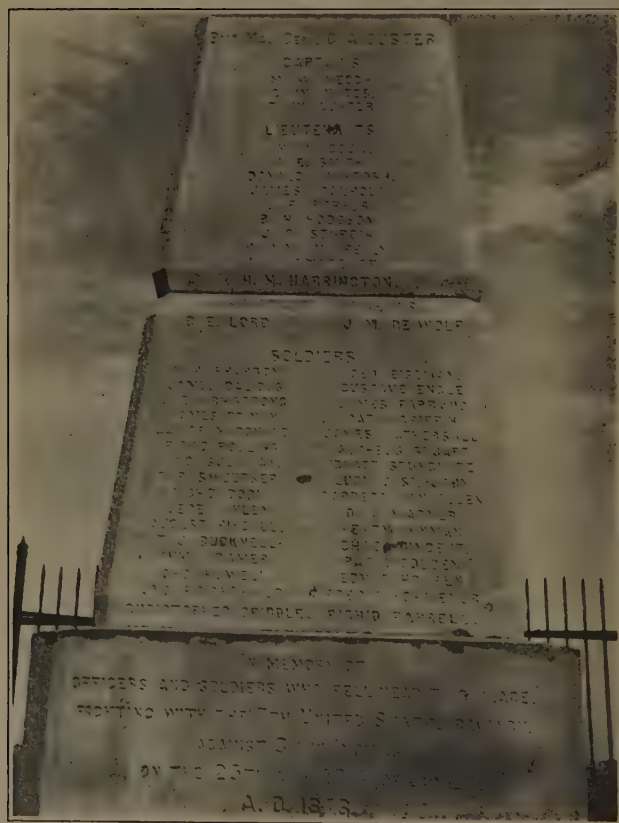
no time did I observe the least indication of drunkenness on the man, nor see him use any liquor.

At dusk that evening of the 26th, the Indians had withdrawn to such an extent that we were enabled to lead our poor famished horses down to the water. I could not locate my own, so grabbed another — a fine black animal, which I later learned belonged to Capt. Weir.

After this, I heard no more firing, but we kept our places in line throughout the night. The next morning we had roll call of the company, and many were missing. Through the kindness of John Ryan, who was first sergeant of my company, I have a copy of that roll call as the dead and missing were marked off.

Later, we observed an immense dust-cloud coming our way up the valley. Some remarked that it was the Indians coming back, but we soon received word that it was Gen. Terry's command. It must have been an awful shock to him, as he was to meet Custer that very 27th of June so they could attack the Indian village together. When he arrived at our position, he told us, with tears in his eyes, what he had seen of the Custer command. It did not seem possible. This was the first intimation we had as to Custer's fate. It was an awful blow to us, as every man lost friends who were in the companies commanded by Custer. Nobody even dreamed that he could possibly meet with such an overwhelming defeat.

Everything was then made ready to move the wounded. Many horses which were badly wounded and unable to go further had to be shot. We were then ordered over to the spot where Custer and his



WEST FACE OF THE CUSTER MONUMENT. PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

men fell. Here, with a few spades, we were set to work to bury them. We had but a few implements of any sort. All that we could possibly do was to remove a little dirt in a low place, roll in a body and cover it with dirt. Some, I can well remember, were not altogether covered, but the stench was so strong from the disfigured, decaying bodies, which had been exposed to an extremely hot sun for two days, that it was impossible to make as decent a job of interring them as we could otherwise have done. There were also great numbers of dead horses lying about, which added to the horror of the situation.

I did not have time to go over the field and make notes, but from what I did see, I gathered that these men were surprised here and killed in a very short space of time. It struck me that many of them had evidently shot their own horses and used them as breastworks until killed. In one instance we found two men lying between the legs of their dead horses. From what I saw of the field, it appeared to me that there was very little time for Custer and his men to make any sort of a defense whatever. All the bodies seemed naked, which would indicate that as soon as the warriors had finished their bloody work, the squaws had ample time to rob the bodies of clothing and valuables and strip the horses of their saddles and trappings and pack it away unmolested.

Doubtless while doing this, the mutilation of the bodies occurred. Some of these disfigurements were too horrible to mention. After being scalped, the skulls were crushed in with stone hammers, and the bodies cut and slashed in all the fleshy portions.

Much of this was doubtless done to wounded men. Many arrows also had been shot into some of the bodies — the eyes, neck, stomach and other members. I observed especially the body of Capt. Tom Custer, which was the worst mutilated of all. Many arrows bristled in it. It is said that he was killed by Rain-in-the-Face in revenge for being arrested the previous year at Standing Rock agency. His body was lying about twenty feet from that of the general, and close beside that of Adjutant Cook, one side of whose face had been scalped, taking with it his magnificent sideburn whiskers. His body also was badly mutilated.

The body of Gen. Custer had not been touched by the Indians. He had been shot twice. Some say the Indians do not mutilate the chief officer, out of respect for his bravery. Others said it was because the Indians wanted to make sure that his white friends would recognize him and know that he had been killed.

Boston Custer was found near the bodies of his two brothers. That of Mark Kellogg, the reporter for the *Bismarck Tribune* and *New York Herald*, who had accompanied the expedition, was close by. These bodies were on the line nearest to the river, making it appear that they were halted by an overwhelming force, which closed in on them so rapidly and in such superior numbers that they were given but little chance to put up a fight.

I was working a spade on this end of the line of dead and so had a hand in burying this group. I am sure that we used more earth in covering Custer's body, and made a larger mound for it than for any of the others. I have heard it said that

there was no certainty that the body of the general was really identified when a party went to the field the following year to remove the bodies of Custer and the officers. I do not think this can be possible, as he was not in the least mutilated. The large mound we erected over his body should have been sufficient to identify his burial spot.

It must have been a great satisfaction to the Indians to know that he was killed, as they had a dread and a fear of Custer, as he was known as the hardest-fighting white chief against them. He was a fearless and brave soldier, and many will agree with me that he was also a hard leader to follow. He always had several good horses whereby he could change mounts every three hours if necessary, carrying nothing but man and saddle, while our poor horses carried man, saddle, blankets, carbine, revolver, haversack, canteen, 10 days' rations of oats and 150 rounds of 45-caliber ammunition, which of itself would weigh more than ten pounds — and we had no extra horses to change off. With the forced night march we made to get to the Little Big Horn, it is no secret why our horses played out before going into action. A number of these worn animals were brought in by the rear guard. A comrade friend of mine — a member of one of the companies with Custer, was fortunate in being detailed to go with the rear guard. His horse had played out and he could not go into action.

In doing this forced marching, it was generally understood that Custer disobeyed the orders of Gen. Terry, insofar that we were expected — as I have stated — to meet Terry's command on the 27th. I have before me now a copy of the written instruc-



JOHN BURKMAN, 7TH CAVALRY, WHO WAS CUSTER'S "STRIKER" FOR MANY YEARS. HE TOOK CUSTER'S EXTRA HORSE "DANDY" AND STAYED WITH THE PACK TRAIN AT THE GENERAL'S ORDERS. BURKMAN DIED BY HIS OWN HAND IN BILLINGS, MONTANA, NOV. 6, 1925, AGED 86 YEARS.

tions from Terry to Custer. This order reads in part that Custer should conform to the orders unless he saw sufficient reason for departing from them; and again it reads: "But it is hoped that the Indians, if upon the Little Big Horn, may be so nearly enclosed *by the two columns* (Terry's and Custer's) that their escape will be impossible." So while this order does not flatly designate June 27th as the time for meeting, yet it shows that Gen. Terry expected to be there with his command when the time for the attack was ripe. It was understood that Custer was under arrest on an order from President Grant, and that his object in going into the fight without Terry, was that if he were to win, he would get all the glory himself, and likely the charges against him would be dismissed. This may have spurred him on to take a desperate chance and make a fatal error. When he first viewed the village from the ridge and saw the immense number of tepees, he must have then observed that his puny force was totally inadequate to cope against the thousands of warriors in the valley below, far better armed than his own command.

Again, I, like many others, think he made a mistake in dividing his command in this fight. Had he kept them together and struck the village at one end, he might have mastered them, or at least, have put them to flight.

A year or so after the battle I was cooking for Capt. French, and we often had a heart-to-heart talk about the Little Big Horn fight. One day I asked him what he would have done had he been in Custer's place. His answer was, "There would have been no fight." Officers, as a rule, are loth to

say anything against another officer, no matter what may be in their mind. So that in all statements made by officers who took part in the battle of the Little Big Horn, none has shown a willingness to speak his mind as to whether Custer did right or wrong in dividing his regiment, or going into the fight before Terry arrived.

After we had buried all the dead on the Custer field, the site of the Reno battle in the river bottom was investigated. The dead there were all buried where they fell. All had been most horribly butchered. Isaiah Dorman, a negro scout and interpreter, was found with many arrows shot into his body and head, and badly cut and slashed, while unmentionable atrocities had been committed. Corporal Henry Scollen of M Troop was found badly mutilated, with his right leg severed from his body. Jim Turley's body was found with his hunting knife driven to the hilt in one eye. Three others, Gordon, Myers and Summers of M Troop were in an awful state of mutilation. I did not see the body of our chief of scouts, Charley Reynolds, who was Custer's favorite guide, and who was killed in the river bottom, but I am sure his body was not respected by the red fiends. Many others were scattered about through the timber, but I did not see them all. In making this retreat from the river bottom, the number of Indians all about us, with the unnumbered hundreds constantly reinforcing them, proved that we only got out just in the nick of time. I consider it lucky that Reno had the good sense and foresight to act when he did and give us a chance for our lives. I recollect that in my dash for the river an Indian rode so close to me that I could have reached

him with a saber, if I had had one. My comrade Smith, whom I have mentioned, and whose horse ran away with him into the Indian lines, may have been captured alive. From our position on the bluffs we could see many fires in the Indian village the night of June 25th, with the Indians dancing about the fires, and it occurred to me then that they might have been burning and torturing some helpless captives at the stake.

After the burial of the dead had been completed, the next task was to move the wounded of Reno's command. Because of the meager facilities at hand, transporting them down to the supply steamer "Far West", which had been lying at the mouth of the Little Big Horn awaiting orders, was no easy task; but we did all that was possible to make them comfortable. Many were carried on travois made from tepee poles left in the deserted Indian village, and while this sort of conveyance was not very desirable over such a rough country, it was the only possible manner of transporting them.

After the wounded had been started down the river on their long journey of nearly 1000 miles to Bismarck, the remainder of the regiment joined forces with Gen. Crook's command, and with all the force then at hand, we were strong enough to wipe out any detachment of savages we might meet. But we did not meet them — for reasons known best to Gen. Crook. Buffalo Bill Cody was at the head as chief of scouts with Gen. Crook. He did not remain with us very long, because of a misunderstanding with Gen. Crook, the nature of which would be but hearsay to me.

Since the Little Big Horn fight I have met with



EMANUEL H. CUSTER, FATHER OF GENERAL GEO. A. CUSTER, MOUNTED ON "DANDY", THE RIDING HORSE THE GENERAL SENT TO THE PACK TRAIN BY HIS "STRIKER", JOHN BURKMAN. "DANDY" WAS SHIPPED TO GENERAL CUSTER'S FATHER AT MONROE, MICH., AND RIDDEN BY HIM FOR MANY YEARS.

many impostors who have recounted their "experiences" on that fatal field, but who were not there at all. I have read, I dare say, a hundred accounts of the death of "last survivors of Custer's command". All such stories are absolutely false, as there were no survivors of Custer's command — every man was killed. One of Custer's Crow scouts, "Curley", long posed as the only living man who escaped. For "Curley" I will say that I do not believe he ever got to the Custer forces, but skirmished his way around the outside until a chance presented itself for him to make his escape undetected. I am certain he was not in the fight.

I would like to state right here that I have read the story of Peter Thompson of C Troop, of his part in the Custer fight, and as I went through the battle from beginning to end, under Major Reno, I will say that I must differ with Thompson in many of his assertions.

To begin with — where he states his horse played out. He was then on the trail of those who went on, and he would naturally travel slow, and would be picked up by the rear guard, as all others were who were in the same predicament, and he would not be allowed to stroll away, as his story states. Why should he leave the trail, where he was safe, with the troops ahead of him, and troops in the rear coming after him, unless he lost his nerve and went to hide out? Then he says he met Jim Watson, and together they trailed along with a worn-out horse, and fought straggling Indians for hours afterward.

He says he wrote this story — originally published in the Belle Fourche Bee, for his children to

read, and not for publication. I think he knows that Jim Watson has passed away, or he would not have given it out yet.

This man Watson was a chum of mine, all through our five years' service. We both enlisted the same hour at Cincinnati, and took to each other from the start. From there we went to St. Louis for six weeks, and all this time we were together from early morning until late at night, every day.

Then we were assigned to the Seventh Cavalry, and Jim went to C Company while I was assigned to Company M, which separated us on several occasions, being stationed at different forts. We met again as we started on the campaign, and saw each other every day.

On the day of the Little Big Horn fight his company was picked as one to go with Custer, but, like Thompson, his horse gave out, and so he had to lead him along until taken up by the rear guard. I was with Major Reno, and some time after the fight in the river bottom, and after settling on the hill for a stand with Benteen and his forces, and the rear guard had come and joined us, I met Watson again, and he related to me how his horse had played out. He had to drop out back of his company, then was picked up by the rear guard. He said nothing of having had any hairbreadth escapes with Thompson, and I am sure Jim would have told me of any such adventures, as we were much together from this time until we were discharged, and went home together as far as Chicago, where he left me to go to Grand Rapids, Michigan, and I went back to Cincinnati, Ohio. I can remember that Jim Watson was badly afflicted with

asthma, and I did not think he would live long. I gave him my address and asked him to write to me, but I never heard from him again.

I may have known this man Thompson while in the service, but cannot recall him now. His story of his wandering about from place to place after he got back with Reno, is beyond my belief. He would not have been allowed to wander around as he says he did, as we were scarcely allowed to lift our heads from the ground; by doing so it would draw the fire of the Indians who were on the higher ridges above us. He says he went for water four times after being shot in the arm. This was a task for a man with two good arms. I know, from having tried it myself. I am willing to believe that he made a trip for water — no more. I consider that he did a brave act at that. What he tells of seeing Custer's men fighting is beyond credence, and what he has to say about Major Reno are flat lies. He was sore at Reno because his (Thompson's) company was all killed with Custer.

Mr. Thompson bears a good reputation in his home town today as a good citizen, and if he would sit down and write a story of facts only of his experiences in the Custer fight, it would be interesting; but his story, as it stands, will never pass as long as there are any of the old boys of the 7th Cavalry left to dispute it.

In conclusion I would state that I have written of this battle just as I saw it and as things presented themselves to my view. Other stories may differ, as each man in his own place saw many things as they happened to him, which others did not see.

This story may reach the eyes of some of my old comrades who were with me in the battle, and I am writing it truthfully so that no person can dispute my statements. No one man can write a story of the fight in general (as many have done) without someone to dispute parts of it.



VALLEY OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN, SHOWING THE PLAIN UPON WHICH THE IMMENSE INDIAN VILLAGE WAS PITCHED. LOOKING WEST FROM RENO'S ENTRENCHMENTS. PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

CHAPTER II

WITH RENO AT THE LITTLE BIG HORN

THRILLING ESCAPE OF LIEUT. CHAS. C. DE RUDIO AND
SERGT. THOS. O'NEILL, 7TH CAVALRY, IN THE
BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN.

WHEN the forces under Major Marcus A. Reno made their gallant, but ineffectual attack on the Indian village strung along the Little Big Horn River, Montana, on that fatal morning of June 25th, 1876, some thrilling incidents occurred. None, however, of the Reno command, underwent more marvelous adventures than Lieut. Chas. C. De Rudio and Sergt. Thomas O'Neill, whose escape from death at the hands of the savages was nothing short of miraculous.

When Major Reno ordered the troops to mount and charge through the Indian cordon and get to the high hills across the river, this order was not generally understood, as no bugle calls were given. Owing to the dense dust kicked up by the Indian ponies, as their riders raced back and forth, as well as to the smoke and general confusion, many of the troopers did not see their companions leave, and about a dozen or fifteen were left behind. It may have been that the horse-holders, who remained in the timber when the skirmish line was formed, either lost control of the animals or else turned them loose in order to effect their own escape. In

any event, these men were unhorsed and obliged to take to the brush to escape the Indians.

They were thus left in a most desperate plight. The majority of the men, however, successfully eluded discovery and capture, and managed to re-join Reno on the bluffs late that night. But Lieut. De Rudio, Sergeant O'Neill, Billy Jackson (a half-breed scout) and Fred F. Girard (an interpreter) were not so fortunate. -

These four remained together at the start, but eventually separated under most thrilling circumstances, and for more than thirty-six hours De Rudio and O'Neill were kept busy, dodging about from point to point, to elude capture. Finally, late on the night of June 26th, they managed to get across the river, after some miraculous escapes. Here they wandered about over bluffs and through ravines, for several hours before they were able to locate the Reno command. About 2 o'clock on the morning of the 27th, they heard the distant bray of a mule, and shortly thereafter were welcomed inside Reno's lines.

After serving out his enlistment, Sergt. O'Neill removed to Washington, D. C., where he was appointed a captain of the park police. During that time he wrote the story of the escape of Lieut. De Rudio and himself. From the original copy, the author has drawn the following facts of their remarkable experience:

"We marched until late on the evening of June 23d, then went into camp for the night. The following day we began the march at 4 a. m., continuing up the Rosebud, and made camp late that evening. About 10 o'clock that night, we received or-

ders to again saddle up and make a night march. We continued on the trail until 4 a. m., when we halted and made coffee, resuming the march about 6 o'clock. After a few hours we came to the head of the Rosebud. Then we began to cross the divide between the Rosebud and Little Big Horn Rivers. Shortly after this, the command halted. Officers' call was sounded, and all the officers reported to General Custer for instructions.

"This occupied but a short time, and soon we were again in the saddle. Our scouts were kept busy in front and on the flanks of the column, reporting new signs of Indians.

"We were now marching on an Indian trail which was nearly a quarter of a mile wide in some places. Indications were that large bodies of savages had very recently passed in the direction we were going. When we were within about 10 miles of the Little Big Horn River and the Indian camp, Capt. F. W. Benteen was ordered out to the left and front of us with three companies of cavalry. If he saw no Indians after going as far as he thought prudent, he was to rejoin the command. As a matter of fact, he saw no signs of Indians until he got back within sight of the river, just as Reno's men had about finished their charging through to the other side of the stream.

"Within three miles or so of the river we came to a place where a small band of Indians had been camped. We evidently surprised them, as they retreated to the larger camp on the river, leaving their cooking utensils on the fires, and one tepee standing. From this point we took the gallop, finally arriving at a high bank over the river. Down

the river, on the other side, and about a mile from us, we could see the Indian camp at the edge of a narrow strip of timber or brush, where there were some small cottonwood trees growing. At this point the stream ran close to the high banks. The Indian village was partly concealed from us by a bend in the river. The Indians, however, appeared at the edge of the camp in great numbers, mounted, and running around, apparently greatly excited.

"It was at this point that Gen. Custer ordered Major Reno to take his battalion of three troops to the other side of the stream and attack the camp, '*and I will support you,*' were the words he used. I belonged to Major Reno's battalion, and we were marched down an old dry creek-bed which debouched into the river near by. Here we crossed the Little Big Horn, the water being about to the horses' bellies. On the opposite bank we formed in fours and took up the gallop toward the Indians. When within about seven hundred yards of them, we came left front into line of battle across the river bottom. When within about five hundred yards of the Indians they opened fire on us.

"As the Indians came out in great numbers to oppose us, and moreover as from this point we could see the extent of the village and the immense number of Indians it contained, and how impossible it appeared to be for us—about 130 or 140 men*—to attempt to charge through such a superior force, our officers decided to act on the defensive. Orders were thereupon given to 'Dismount and prepare to fight on foot.' Three troopers out

*Reno's testimony at the Court of Inquiry was that his total command numbered 112 men.



SERGT. THOS. O'NEILL, 7TH CAVALRY. FROM
A PHOTO TAKEN ABOUT 25 YEARS AGO
WHEN HE WAS A PARK POLICEMAN IN
WASHINGTON, D. C.

of each four men dismounted, the fourth man holding the horses. Line was formed, and the horses maneuvered with the line and six or seven yards in the rear of it.

"We now began to answer the fire of the Indians, the main body of which seemed to be about a thousand yards away, but great numbers circled about within five hundred yards or less, all mounted and shooting at us. Our right rested near the brush, the left extending about two hundred yards across the plain, the men being three yards apart on the line. At this time, Custer's command was on the opposite side of the river, and the space between the two columns became greater as we advanced. When the fighting commenced, I should judge Custer and Reno were about a mile and a half apart.

"General Custer and his five companies now disappeared behind a high bluff, going in the direction of the lower end of the Indian village, and that was the last we ever saw of him or his command alive.

"From the point we now occupied we could see the extent of the village. It appeared to be over two miles in length, the tepees covering the river bottom thickly, and the camp in some places was seven or eight hundreds yards wide.

"Shortly, the Indians began to close in on our left flank, which was not as well protected. Major Reno evidently realized the danger of being surrounded, or flanked, and wheeled the line, our backs being to the river and our right resting toward the village. It was discovered that at some previous time the stream had run close to our back position, but had changed its course further away about three

hundred yards, which left a deep ditch in our rear. We were ordered to lie down on the edge of this bank, keeping up a constant fire, our horses being led behind us. Twenty men under Lieut. McIntosh (of whom I was one) were ordered to deploy in skirmish line and scout the brush, in order to ascertain if the Indians could attack us from the rear. We found thick underbrush and vines and some cottonwood trees growing on this place, and at the head of it and toward the village, a very deep cut or washout. As we discovered no Indians between us and the river, the lieutenant came back and reported.

“At this time the fighting was terrific, the Indians charging up very close. They would deliver their fire, wheel their ponies and scamper to the rear to reload.

“But we observed that they were forming in greater numbers on our left, where they could deliver a flank fire. It was thought by our officers that they were forming for a charge on that end. A brisk consultation was held by the officers, who shouted back and forth from their positions on the line. It was decided to retreat to a place where they could defend themselves better, as we were losing many men and horses. The order was thereupon given by Major Reno to ‘get to your horses, men.’ While this order was being given and executed, the fire from the troopers slackened very materially—in fact, it practically ceased. This gave the Indians greater confidence than ever, and they pressed in on us in greatly increasing numbers. Their forces were greatly augmented by hun-

dreds of others arriving every minute from the lower end of the village.

"Reaching our horses the command 'Mount' was given. It was to be a charge to reach the other side of the river. Pistols were drawn by each man, carbines loaded and carried in front of us on the saddles or hanging by our side from the sling-belt, ready for immediate use.

"The troopers rode out of the thicket by twos, those on the right being expected to deliver their fire in that direction, and those on the left to attend to that side. It was about three-quarters of a mile across a perfectly level plain before we could reach a fording place. After that, there was a remarkably steep bank to climb to reach the bluffs, and in climbing this, the troops would be fully exposed to a merciless fire.

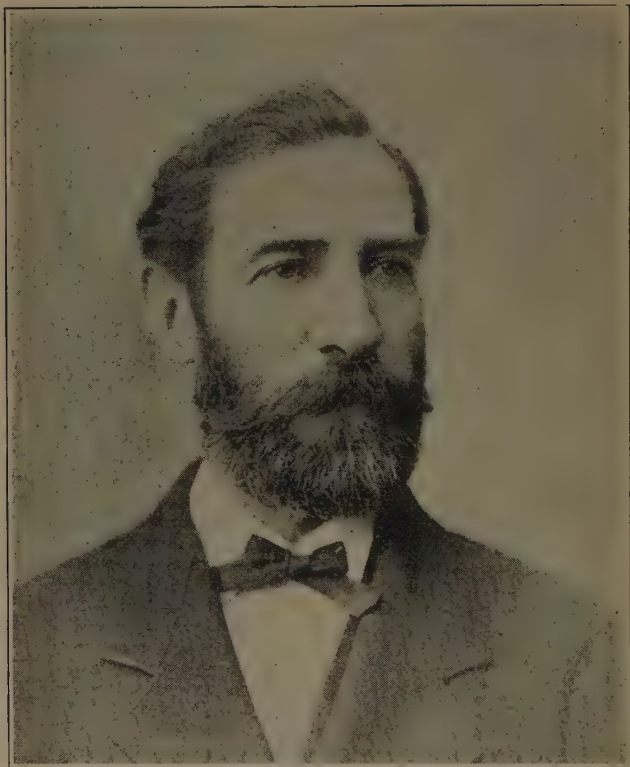
"Every man of our small command seemed to realize fully the desperate situation we were in, and what was expected of him — which was to keep up a constant fire and make every shot tell.

"As we emerged from the thicket the warwhoop burst forth from a thousand throats! It was a race for life! The Indians pressed in closely on each side of the column, firing into the troopers, while the troopers in turn answered this fire. It was a hand-to-hand conflict, both Indians and troopers striving to pull each other from their horses, after emptying their weapons, and both succeeding, in a great many instances. I saw six or seven of our men in the act of falling from their horses after being shot. One poor fellow close to me was shot in the body, and as he was falling to the ground, was

shot again through the head. I heard the shots as they struck him.

"I now found myself in the most desperate situation I had ever faced in my life. Our men were falling; Indians were tumbling from their ponies, either killed or wounded; ponies and horses, riderless, were dashing here and there, rifles, carbines and revolvers were roaring about me, while the cheers of the troopers and the warwhoops of the Indians made everything a perfect pandemonium.

"Before I had ridden two hundred yards, my horse crumpled under me, stricken down by an Indian bullet, and I was left dismounted in the midst of the Indians. I saw my comrades leaving me far behind, and expected every minute to feel a bullet, arrow or spear in my body. For a moment I was paralyzed with fear, and did not know what to do. My first thought was to run after the command, and then the folly of such a course became apparent. Then I determined to see if I could not reach the thicket out of which we had just ridden. So I faced about and legged it in that direction, expecting every moment would be my last on earth. But the Indians seemed all intent on getting at the mounted men, and many of them passed me without seeming to take the least notice of me. Others pointed their guns at me as they swept past on the dead run; some fired at me, but missed. At those who came very close to me, I pointed my carbine. Some would drop to the other side of their mounts, lying nearly flat against the side opposite me, exposing only a foot and part of an arm. At some of these I did fire, but I saw only one fall, although as I was always considered an excellent shot in the regiment,



FRED F. GIRARD, A WELL-KNOWN TRADER AND INTERPRETER.
FOUGHT WITH THE RENO COMMAND.

I am sure I must have wounded some whose ponies carried them safely on.

"As I reached the thicket and dashed into concealment, I came face to face with Lieut. De Rudio. Like myself, his horse had been shot from under him, and he had had an experience similar to mine in reaching the thicket. The lieutenant was looking intently at the retreating column, doubtless wishing, like myself, that he was with it. I was overjoyed at seeing him, even under such perilous conditions. Prior to that moment I thought I was the only unfortunate left behind.

"The lieutenant then told me that there were two others left behind, like ourselves, and that they were but a few yards from us. It developed that the two men were Billy Jackson, one of our half-breed scouts, and Fred Girard, an interpreter. Lieut. De Rudio got us together and gave us some hurried instructions what to do in case the Indians made a rush on us — which we expected every minute, as we could not possibly hope to escape detection long.

"We lay in a hole or indenture in the sand, which I think must have been the river bed at one time. Some thick underbrush growing around this hole pretty effectually concealed us from the view of the savages, who were riding back and forth on the plain in front of our position, and not more than fifty or sixty feet away. They were greatly excited, and reminded me of an ant's nest when disturbed — everyone seeming intent on something, and everyone on his own business.

"The lieutenant instructed us not to fire until discovered — and we expected every second to be. We were lying on our stomachs, with our heads even

with the top of the hole, on the lookout for anyone who might approach, and each watching in a different direction, when we would all four fire at them.

"The lieutenant kept his keen eyes on all points of the compass, and encouraged us to be cool. 'Men,' he said, 'we have to die sometime, and we will die like brave men; but I am in hopes we will get out of this scrape yet.'

"It was not long before several squaws came around quite close to our position. They picked up their own dead or wounded, their grief seeming most pitiable, wailing and crying. The dead bodies of our men they stripped of their clothing, and cut and mutilated them in every conceivable way with the knives which they carried. Some of their actions we could plainly see. It made me faint and sick, not knowing how soon they might be disfiguring my own body in a similar manner, and I determined to sell my life dearly in the event of discovery. Owing to our good position, we figured that we should be able to kill several of our assailants before they could dispose of us.

"I did not know what Lieut. De Rudio's own hopes were, but I know that all mine vanished, and I never expected to get out of that place alive. My whole life seemed to pass in a panorama before me, carrying me back to the old home in the East, and to friends whom I had not thought of before in years. All the principal events of my life came crowding forward, one after another, so fast that for a short time I forgot the danger which surrounded me.

"An hour passed — two — three, and yet no effort was made to effect our capture, nor were we

discovered. In this concealment we lay until darkness over-shadowed the plain in front of us. Then after a whispered consultation we determined to try and find the command — if any of it remained alive, of which we had grave doubts. 'Indians never fight in the night time,' the lieutenant confided in a low tone, 'and if we keep together and you men will act under my orders, I believe we will yet reach the command alive.'

"We had no idea how it had fared with Custer or Reno. We had listened to terrific firing both up and down the river, and realized that the loss must have been heavy. For myself I thought that when the firing had ceased in the direction Custer had gone, it meant that he had retreated to Major Reno's position. I think it was about 5 o'clock when we heard the last shots from Custer's direction; but Major Reno's command kept up their firing at intervals, as though they were being charged upon. But along about dark, all firing from that direction also ceased.

"We talked but little, lest we should be overheard by the Indians. But now we determined to leave our hiding place, although such a move was decidedly precarious, even after darkness had settled down. We looked about and listened intently, but could neither hear nor see anything. The moon was up, and shining through a haze, but it was not very bright, so we decided to make a break for our lives, come what might, as it was our only salvation. We did not dare remain in our present position until daybreak.

"Of course we had had nothing to eat or drink. It had been an intensely hot day, and our throats

were parched. Perhaps I was more thirsty than the others, owing to the fact that while with the command on the skirmish line, I had caught my foot while maneuvering around, tripping and falling on my nose, which made it bleed profusely. Not being able to give it attention at the time, the blood had run down my throat and almost choked me. It seemed as if I should die of thirst before I could reach water.

“When we emerged from the thicket, Girard and Jackson were mounted on ponies they had concealed in the brush. The lieutenant and I were on foot. We advanced but a short distance when a ghastly sight met our eyes. We were on the ground where our command had met the Indians in their retreat. The savages had rushed upon them, killing several of the men, who were lying there, stripped of their clothing, and cut and hacked with the knives of the squaws. We did not pause here many seconds. All the men were beyond any aid from us. We followed along in the trail as well as we could in the uncertain light, the route being well marked by the dead bodies of either troopers or their horses.

“We had advanced not more than half way toward the river, when we met — or would have met, had they not sidled off to our right about one hundred yards — a party of mounted savages, eight or ten in number. Lieut. De Rudio and I tried to hide ourselves on the opposite side of the ponies ridden by Girard and Jackson, thinking we might be taken for some of their own people. Evidently the Indians were suspicious, as they ran away from us



LIEUT. CHAS. C. DE RUDIO, 7TH CAVALRY. FROM A PHOTO TAKEN
ABOUT 30 YEARS AGO AS MAJOR U. S. A.

in the opposite direction — for which, it is needless to say, we were devoutly thankful.

“Quickening our pace, we soon reached the river at the point where the command had jumped their horses into the stream in their wild retreat. We scanned the opposite bank for some trace of the spot where they had climbed the precipitous bluff, but could discern nothing but a black, steep bank, towering high. A short distance away there also seemed to be a level piece of flat river-bottom of about fifty yards’ extent.

“The lieutenant whispered to me to lower myself into the water to ascertain its depth. Holding to some bushes at the edge of the bank, I slid in. I went nearly up to my neck at the first plunge, and the current was so swift it almost swept me off my feet. I climbed hastily out with the assistance of the lieutenant. But he was not satisfied until he had tried it himself. I held him while he slipped into the stream. But he decided it was impossible for us to cross at this place.

“It was the first chance we had had of getting a drink of water for many long, weary hours, so I took off my large slouch hat, the crown of which would hold about a gallon, filled it from the stream and passed it around. Each man drank until he was satisfied, and we all declared it was the sweetest water we had ever tasted.

“The night was slipping away, and we cautiously explored the bank of the swift-running stream for a ford. Owing to the fact that the melting snows in the mountains at that season of the year sent all streams in that section almost out of banks, it looked like a hazardous undertaking.

"In the rear, and down the river, we could see and hear great circles of the Indians holding a war dance around burning piles of wood and brush. The flames lighted the spot about them, and the forms of the Indians could be distinctly seen, jumping about and flourishing weapons. I never will forget the weird appearance of those savages, as their yells and whoops echoed up and down the valley plainly. The only musical accompaniment was a sort of 'Huh-ha, huh-ha!' We afterward learned that they had the heads of three of our comrades, and that these men were partly burned in the fires by these red devils.* It looked as if even the squaws were taking part in the exciting dances.

"From the excitement, it was quite apparent to us that the Indians had had a successful day of it. As we had not heard anything further from our comrades since dark, we thought probably they had taken advantage of the night to retreat still further. One thing we did know—our only hope of safety was in getting on the other side of the river.

"We continued our march upstream slowly and cautiously, trying in vain to find a fording-spot, but were unsuccessful. We then decided to return to the place where the command had crossed early in the afternoon when making the first attack on the village.

"In this conclusion we came to a spot where it seemed likely we could cross the stream. I waded in and found the current less swift, the water reaching but a little above my knees. The others fol-

*The Sioux have always maintained that they took no prisoners at the battle of the Little Big Horn.

lowed, and we crossed what we supposed was the main stream, but we afterward discovered we were on an island. The river divided a short distance above, and ran on each side of this strip of land, which was of considerable extent, being nearly a mile long and several hundred yards wide. It was dotted with thick clumps of bulberry bushes, some of them covering as much as twenty square yards. There were also some young cottonwood trees on this island, and some tall, rank grass which reached to our waists. We crossed the island diagonally, supposing we were really on the other bank, but suddenly we came to the river again. This confused us very much. In riding to the attack in the afternoon we had not observed this island, and we wondered if we might not have become turned around and lost our direction. We tried again to cross the main stream, but it was useless, as we saw nothing on the other side but steep bluffs which we could not possibly climb.

"As we were moving cautiously about, we came to one of these thick clumps of bulberry bushes, and a startled voice suddenly hailed us. The deep, guttural tones were those of an Indian, and Girard and Jackson wheeled their ponies like lightning and galloped away in the direction from which we had approached. That was the last we saw of them until we met them in camp the following night.

"Lieut. De Rudio and I were some ten yards apart when the challenge came. I saw him kneeling down in the tall grass, and followed suit as quickly as possible. Had we run away, there was a clear space of nearly a hundred yards which we would have to cross before we could get under cover of one of the

brush clumps. The Indians most assuredly would have fired on us. Hearing nothing further after Jackson and Girard galloped away, the Indians evidently thought something was wrong, as they jumped their horses into the river with the greatest haste and confusion. To accelerate their flight, Lieut. De Rudio fired two shots from his revolver in quick succession. I had my carbine pointed in their direction, and I sent a bullet after them. While I was reloading, the lieutenant sent another shot after them. By this time they were across the river. I had not seen any of them, only heard the noise and clatter, but the lieutenant, who was nearer the river, said he could see six or seven Indians, who appeared to be on picket on the point at the fork of the river where it divided to form the island.

"As I was about to fire a second shot, De Rudio called out, 'O'Neill, they are all gone.' Possibly the Indians were somewhat drowsy after their hard day's fight, and maybe we caught them napping. I think it must have been about two o'clock at this time. We retreated backward a few hundred yards. From there we wandered about on the island, unable to understand how we were surrounded by water as well as Indians.

"After this experience we were afraid to go up to the ford of the afternoon, for fear of running into more Indian pickets. After walking back and forth along the main part of the stream, in a vain attempt to find a ford, I became so tired and utterly worn out that I exclaimed, 'Lieutenant, please let us sit down. My boots are full of water, and my clothing all dripping, and I want to wring them out.'

So we sat down in a clump of brush, and I took off some of my clothes, my boots and stockings. I had just finished wringing my saturated clothing, and began to put them on again, when we were once more startled by the clatter of horse's hoofs and the sound of voices. The morning was dawning on us before we realized it was growing so late. The Indians were coming past in front of us and along the river bank to begin another attack on Reno's command. The lieutenant had pulled on his boots and I was tugging at mine. He arose and looked out. A column of mounted men were passing us about two or three hundred yards away. Calling to me in a low tone, he excitedly said, 'O'Neill, I believe it is the command.' By this time I had my boots on and joined De Rudio. I could see horsemen, but in the uncertain gray of approaching dawn I could not distinguish who they were. They were riding in great numbers, and were near enough so we could distinguish the sound of voices only. Some of them had ascended the bluff through a cut or washout in the bank, which heretofore we had not observed. The lieutenant observed one man dressed in a buckskin suit, whom he took to be Capt. Tom Custer, as he had worn such an outfit on this expedition. De Rudio whispered excitedly, 'That surely is Tom Custer!' Some of the horsemen were climbing the steep banks on the other side of the river; some were just at the top and could overlook the island we were on. The rider whom we took to be Tom Custer was just going up the cut. I thought it surely was Captain Custer, and was nearly overjoyed at the prospect of soon being with my comrades once more. At the same time, Lieut. De Rudio stepped



LIEUT. CHAS. A. VARNUM, 7TH CAVALRY. PHOTO ABOUT 1873.

boldly out on the river bank and shouted, 'Hey! Tom Custer! Tom Custer!' The riders stopped and looked in our direction, and then in an instant the warwhoop sounded and a volley of at least fifty shots were fired at us! How we escaped being hit is a miracle, for the bullets cut the brush about us in every direction! The riders were all Sioux Indians dressed in some of the uniforms they had taken — we later learned — from Custer's men in the battle the previous afternoon, and were riding Seventh Cavalry horses which they had captured.

"Our escape on this occasion was simply miraculous! None of the Indians made any attempt to cross the river after us. We jumped into the bushes on the opposite side from where we had been standing, and stooping low, ran toward another clump, bending over so that only our backs could be seen above the grass. In this way we reached another thick clump of brush, and just as we were going around it we ran plump into another party of mounted Indians! In fact, we were so close that we almost ran over each other. There were six or seven Indians in the party, and our sudden appearance took them by surprise and frightened their ponies to such an extent that the animals all reared and began to plunge about. Evidently this party was not looking for us in that direction, although some of the savages on the hill were shouting to their companions down below, doubtless warning them to be on the lookout for us.

"I had my carbine at a ready. The lieutenant had carried his pistol in his hand for hours, and he immediately opened fire. I also commenced shooting at them. The Indian ponies were rearing, snorting

and plunging about to such an extent that their riders had all they could do to stay on the backs of their animals without using their guns. And to this we owed our lives. While they were in this confusion we poured eight shots into them. Two of the riders, I am sure, fell, and I saw three ponies gallop away riderless. I think we must have wounded others who managed to cling to their ponies.

“This was a most one-sided encounter. We had the advantage of being on the ground and could deliver a rapid and effective fire. We stood shoulder to shoulder. I did not even throw my carbine to my shoulder—the Indians were so close—but just pointed it in their direction and pulled the trigger. Though I scarcely expected to remain alive five minutes longer, I felt the greatest satisfaction at having inflicted so much injury to the enemy in the short space of time allowed us. I have often wondered if those Indians who did manage to get out of range alive did not consider us two demons whom they ran against in the gray of that June morning, to inflict so much damage among them in such a short space of time. The lieutenant was a quick and accurate revolver shot. He fired five shots, and I am sure he hit the mark every time, while I fired three shots with my carbine. The Indians only fired a single shot at us, which went wild of the mark. De Rudio then shouted to me to run. The last thing I saw of those Indians, two or three of them were on the ground, and several ponies were rearing over each other.

“In our flight, and about a hundred and fifty yards from the spot of this last encounter, we came

to a place of all places on the little island which was an ideal spot to make a defense and have the advantage of covering. Some time previously, several cottonwood trees had been cut down at this particular point, leaving stumps about three feet high. A freshet had later occurred, washing many fallen logs against these stumps, and there they had remained, forming a small angle, and making a perfect breastwork from which to fire. Lieut. De Rudio's quick eye caught the place, and he exclaimed, 'Quick, O'Neill, get in here!' He jumped in among the fallen logs and I after him. We wormed our way still deeper into the mass of debris, and found that we were perfectly protected by the logs. Before any Indians could get at us, it would be necessary for them to cross an open space of nearly one hundred yards, and besides, would have to climb over our barricade to reach us.

"We here shook hands with each other, declaring we could not run a step further. If we had to die — as it certainly seemed — we would die there fighting. I took off my cartridge belt, and found that I had just twenty-five rounds left for the carbine and twelve for the pistol. As the lieutenant was the better pistol shot, I gave him mine in addition to his own, and the ammunition for them, while I retained the carbine.

"About the time we landed in this retreat, we heard fierce musketry on the hills, apparently about a mile distant. The Indians had again attacked Reno's command. We could hear our comrades responding beautifully. We could also hear the Indian chiefs calling to their men down in the river

bottom. Several shots were fired in our direction, but we laid low and did not respond.

"All this time we were momentarily expecting the Indians to make a rush on us, and we were looking in every direction for them. The ground behind us sloped down to the river, which was about two hundred yards away, and there was a clear space all about us of nearly a hundred yards. The grass was tall, and we kept a sharp lookout, lest some of the Indians crawl up on our position. We figured that in the event of a charge, we ought to be able to kill five or six of them anyway. I do not think they knew exactly where we were, although several of their bullets struck the logs behind which we were lying. Occasionally we could see them by twos, threes and fives, but not any closer than two hundred and fifty yards at any time; so we laid low and never fired a shot because we did not care to draw their fire. The lieutenant cautioned me: 'When they come to the clearing, and seem to be looking for us, you take dead aim at the foremost, and then keep up the fire while they are coming toward us, but don't shoot until you are dead-sure of your aim.' At target practice I could hit an object the size of my hat nearly every time at two hundred yards. I was nervous no longer. I had become so desperate that it seemed to quiet my nerves, and I am sure I was as steady as at any time in my life and could do as good shooting. We scarcely expected to get out of this place alive, but it seemed our duty, so the lieutenant said, to defend ourselves as long as possible, and to the best of our ability. There was no use surrendering, as it only meant death by the most horrible form of torture.

"About this time a second charge was made against the troops on the hill, and again the Indians were repulsed. Then a desultory firing was kept up by the savages. As we later learned, the Indians picked off a great many men during the intervals between the charges.

"It was now about 9 o'clock in the morning of the 26th, and we were wondering how long the Indians were going to delay the time when they would come to hunt us out. We conversed in a low tone. The lieutenant said, 'O'Neill, I believe they are afraid to come after us; they do not know exactly where we are, and they know they will lose more than they can get. That lesson we taught them a while ago may be our salvation.'

"Then De Rudio added: —

" 'O'Neill, are you married?'

" 'No, sir,' I replied.

" 'Well,' was the response, 'I would not care so much if I were alone, but what will my wife and three young children do if I get killed? That's what is worrying me.'

"About this time we heard the sound of voices and the tramp of horses close at hand. Looking cautiously out, we could see great bands of the squaws and children passing on the bottom, up the river, toward the mountains. The squaws were riding like the men, carrying their babies on their backs. Children six years of age and upward rode ponies, and all such were mounted. Their cooking utensils and provisions were all packed on travois. Other ponies were being led or were driven along. We were glad we were not lying where they could

see us as they passed. The squaws seemed quite merry, as they were singing and 'ke-ing', laughing and shouting to each other. I judge that it took them an hour or more to pass. Sometimes there were bunches of them a couple of hundred yards wide. They did not march in any regular order. Finally it appeared that all had passed us.

"Although we could not now see an Indian any place, yet we knew they were on the bluffs over us, as an occasional charge was made on the command. Our hopes now began to revive considerably. We trusted that the command would be able to drive them away, not realizing how badly the troops had been crippled, and how they had to act on the defensive.

"One hour after another gradually wore away, until it became about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I think it was about that time the Indians made the last charge against the command, and it seemed to be a most desperate one and more fierce than any preceding it, judging by the musketry fire and the whooping and yelling on the part of the Indians and the cheers from the troopers. We later learned that the position held by Reno was on top of the highest bluff, while the ground sloped gradually away, with several washouts or deep cuts running in all directions from it. The troopers were formed in line all around the top of this bluff, and in order to reach them, the Indians were obliged to climb the steep sides. In the last charge, some of the savages managed to gain the top of the bluff before they were killed. The troops counter-charged them, and the loss among the Indians was so severe that they made no further attempts to gain the bluff.



BILLY JACKSON, HALFBREED SCOUT, WHO FOUGHT WITH THE
RENO BATTALION.

Had they once broken the line, not a man would have been left to tell the tale.

"By 5 o'clock the shooting seemed to have entirely ceased. Neither could we see any further signs of Indians. I finally asked the lieutenant if I might crawl out and take a look around. He told me to do so, and I crawled out to make a little reconnoiter. On the high bank on the other side of the river I saw one solitary Indian, mounted, seemingly on picket. I now moved to a spot where there was a little more shrubbery growing and very cautiously stood up for a look. On our side of the river, and only about three hundred yards from us, I counted fifteen Indians sitting in a circle, seemingly smoking and talking among themselves. They were near the bank of the main channel of the river. After a glance about I stooped down, and carefully and slowly crawled back to the lieutenant and reported what I had seen.

"We now renewed our vigilance, feeling sure that an organized effort would be made to locate us before the Indians left. As we heard no further shooting, nor any signs from the command, we concluded they had retreated and that the main body of Indians had followed them up, leaving a few to guard the spot where we had last been seen.

"Now it was again getting near sundown and darkness would soon be coming on. Our hope of getting away now began to rise again rapidly. I became so nervous that I could not contain myself, and for the first time during the day began to feel afraid. Everything was deathly silent around us. I often imagined I saw the forms of Indians creep-

ing up on us, and was nearly ready to fire as the dusk of night came on.

"It was now, as much as at any previous time, that Lieut. De Rudio showed himself to be one of the coolest and bravest men I ever saw. He repeatedly quieted me by his sound advice and reassuring manner, saying, 'O'Neill, I know we will get out of this all right if you will just be patient a little while longer. From our experience last night I am certain the Indians will not shoot at night if we chance to run into them. We now know how to get across the river, and if we do not find the command, we will follow our trail back to the Yellowstone River, traveling at night and hiding by day. We can pick up some scraps to eat in our old camps, or maybe we can shoot a deer or an antelope. I am sure we can reach the 'Far West' (our supply steamer) in five days; but I am in hopes of finding the command on the other side of the river, and then we will be all right.'

"We had had nothing to eat in almost forty hours, and nothing to drink all that hot summer day. Our throats were nearly parched. I did not feel at all hungry, however. Night came on about 9 o'clock, and we then left our snug retreat and crept through the long grass to the water's edge. After looking cautiously about, we waded into the stream and crossed in safety to the other side and climbed up the steep banks. Nothing of life was to be seen or heard; not a sound, except the wind sighing through the rank grass and sagebrush.

"We now wrung out our wet clothes and dried ourselves as much as possible. We were, as we thought, about a mile from Reno's supposed posi-

tion, and as we did not see any further signs of Indians, we walked along in that direction. Occasionally we would lay down and listen, but could hear nothing. The great valley seemed absolutely deserted. We had thought that if the command still held the place where we supposed it to be, we ought to hear some sign of life, and came to the conclusion at last that the troops must have retreated.

"Our next decision was to follow the trail down to the Rosebud, and thence to the Yellowstone. We knew the general direction. We decided to cross the divide as soon as possible to the Rosebud and when daylight came to hide in the brush until night, then resume our march until we came to a place of safety.

"We began our march along a dry creek and continued on a mile or so until we came to quite a high knoll looming up in front of us. We then concluded to climb to the top and see if we could locate any campfires anywhere. When we reached the top we looked about in every direction, but no fires were to be seen. We were just about to take up our march, very much disheartened, when we heard a mule braying in the direction Reno's command had held. That was the sweetest music I believe I ever listened to. It luckily changed our plans very materially. We figured that the mule surely must belong to the command, so we concluded to search for them, come what might. It was a dangerous undertaking at best. If we were certain it was our men we could assuredly go up within hailing distance and call to them, but we had not forgotten our thrilling experience of the early morning in hailing strangers, and determined to take no such chances. If we

crawled up on the command some picket might see us and shoot us, thinking we were Indians.

"We walked some distance further in the direction from which the braying of the mule had come, stopping every few yards to listen. At last we came near enough to hear the sound of voices, but could not distinguish whether they were our men or not. Now our predicament was perilous in the extreme. We crawled along on the ground on our stomachs, hitching along a few inches at a time, expecting every moment to be detected and shot at. We still heard the sound of voices. Sometimes we would think they were Indians, while again we thought they sounded familiar. At last we heard someone exclaim in a loud voice, 'Bring that horse here!' I recognized the voice of Sergeant McVey of A Troop, whereupon I called out to him. 'Mac, don't shoot on us! It is O'Neil and Lieut. De Rudio!' Several voices thereupon shouted, 'Come on in!' which we did in double-quick time. We were in the hands of our comrades at last!

"Needless to say, we had much to relate that night before we snatched a little sleep. We discovered that Jackson and Girard had come into camp but a short time prior to ourselves. It seems that after they had run away and left us, they abandoned their ponies and concealed themselves in some thick brush all the next day. Luckily for them, the Indians did not pass close to them, they being outside the line of march. After dark, like ourselves, they found the camp. Jackson was a half-breed Indian scout — a very young man, but brave and cool.

"The Indians had all retreated that evening up the river toward the mountains. General Terry and

his command came up about 11 o'clock the next morning, and it was learned that General Custer and every man of his command had been killed about three miles from our position.

"Often when I begin to think of all we went through during those trying thirty-six hours of mental torture there in the river bottom, dodging the Indians, I wonder if it is possible that it all did actually happen, or if it was some terrible nightmare."

In connection with the entrance into the Reno entrenchments of De Rudio and O'Neill, the author has received the following interesting communication from Col. Chas. A. Varnum of San Francisco, the first officer of the Seventh Cavalry to welcome the fugitives inside the lines:

"I have been pretty busy since I received your letter or would have answered sooner. You know, of course, that on the evening of June 26th, we moved our position to some extent. The up-stream flank of our position became the down-stream flank, and we extended it toward the river and fortified it some. We also got our horses and mules down to water, a few at a time. I was up and busy till midnight or past. Everything was quiet. My pack-mule was lost and I had no baggage. In looking for something to make myself comfortable I found De Rudio's bedding-roll. I thought I might as well use it. I had just got well fixed for a nap when I heard a picket challenge and De Rudio answered: 'It is me — Lieut. De Rudio and Sergt. O'Neill.' I was some distance down from the bluff when I heard the challenge and answer. I ran up the slope calling to

De Rudio to wait till I got up there, as he would fall into gullies if he tried to come to my voice where I was. As I arrived at the crest near the gully, I stumbled over something and fell over a dead Indian. Then I ran on and called to De Rudio to come to me, which he did, and embraced me and was very much excited. I took him to his bed and got him something to eat.

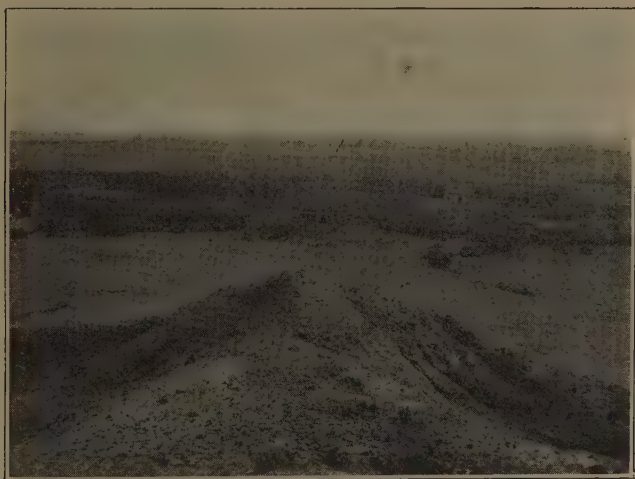
"In 1898, on Decoration Day, I visited the field with a party from Sheridan, Wyoming, where I was buying horses. I found the monument marking where Dr. De Wolf and Lieut. Hodgson fell, and from there told members of the party what to look for as I went on, and my memory was verified by their finding traces of what I described.

"I was standing where I thought I found that Indian's body and spoke of it, and how I happened to be there, etc., when a newspaper man said, 'What is this?' Small round stones had been laid in a square about two feet each way, and then built up with other small stones, forming a sort of pyramid about four inches high. Sticks stuck in the ground with red cloth bundles, medicine bags tied to them and some other ornaments were there, and I said at once. 'That is that Indian's monument.' This Indian was scalped by interpreter Fred Girard, and the scalp was given to a newspaper man in Chicago when we were there at the Reno investigating board, or Court of Inquiry; at least, Girard told me so when we were in Chicago at that time. I never knew O'Neill's first name. He was a G Troop man I think."

After the remnant of the 7th Cavalry was encamped on the Yellowstone River a few weeks fol-

lowing the Little Big Horn fight, Lieut. De Rudio, in a letter to a friend, in recounting the thrilling experience of himself and Sergt. O'Neill, wrote:

"I should do injustice to my feelings if I were to omit to mention the fidelity and bravery of Sergt. O'Neill. He faithfully obeyed me and stood by me like a brother. I shall never cease to remember him and his service to me during our dangerous companionship. This brave soldier is highly thought of by his company commander, and of course will ever be by me and mine."



VALLEY OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN (LOOKING WEST) SCENE OF RENO'S FIRST ENGAGEMENT. VIEW FROM RENO HILL. PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

CHAPTER III

WAS MAJOR MARCUS A. RENO A COWARD?

WHAT THE OFFICIAL RECORDS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT HIS
CONDUCT AT THE LITTLE BIG HORN.

FOR fifty years the general public has been led to believe that Major Marcus A. Reno played the part of a coward in the battle of the Little Big Horn, June 25, 1876. People who are not well posted on this remarkable engagement have come to believe that Reno left Custer to his fate—entrenched himself on the bluffs across the river, and was afraid to go to Custer's relief. Let us investigate this alleged misconduct of Major Reno's and see whether these charges have any foundation whatever.

Without going into full details of the battle, let us begin at the point where Custer and Reno separated, which was some few miles from where the actual fighting began. Custer ordered Reno to attack the upper end of the great Indian village with the three companies assigned him—Companies M, A and G, *promising him the full support of his (Custer's) own battalion of five companies.*

Reno did as ordered. His three companies consisted of exactly 112 men, many of them green recruits who had enlisted that spring; who never had seen a hostile Indian until that morning, were not experienced horsemen and were poor shots. After

Reno had reached a point where he could view the extent and size of the village, he saw at once that he was "up against it", and that he was outnumbered appallingly. Custer had ordered him to "charge the village". But when Reno noted that this would mean the immediate sacrifice of his command, he wisely and prudently refrained from doing anything of the kind. He started the engagement, but soon noting that the Indians were closing in on him from all sides, front and rear, he withdrew to a stand of timber where the horses of the command had been left when his men started for the firing line. In a very few moments, Major Reno saw that he was in a veritable hornet's nest, from which he must immediately withdraw unless he met utter annihilation. Further, *Custer had not come to his support, as promised.*

The major decided that the high hills on the opposite side of the Little Big Horn River, about one mile distant, was the best place to make a stand. In the excitement and roar of battle, the order to mount and get to the hills was not generally understood, and a dozen or fifteen men were left behind, either because their mounts escaped from the horseholders or were hurriedly taken by others.

Just about this time, Custer began his attack four miles down stream and on the opposite side of the river from where Reno had begun the battle. This drew the attention of many hundreds of the Indians, who at once left off attacking Reno and rushed to the assistance of their red brothers at the other end of the village. However, there were fully a thousand of the savages left to harass Reno's charge for the hills, although they did not follow

up the advantage they gained on the retreat from the timber to the edge of the river. In this movement Reno lost some twenty-nine men. How any of them escaped at all is a marvel.

Gaining the high hills across the river, Reno was shortly joined by Capt. F. W. Benteen, whose command of three companies had been ordered "off to the left" by Custer; but as Benteen met with no Indians, he gradually worked back into the trail made by Reno in advancing to the battle. Here he met Reno's excited battalion fighting its way across the river, and at once joined him on the hill. There the two commands fought until the afternoon of June 26th, successfully keeping the savage hordes from overwhelming them, all this time wondering and speculating as to what had become of Custer, little dreaming that he had been annihilated to a man the previous afternoon.

The advance up the river of the troops of Generals Terry and Gibbon — whom Custer had been warned to wait for, but for reasons of his own failed to obey these instructions — was noted by the savages, and they accordingly left off attacking Reno's command and prepared for a hurried flight, departing in one immense body, but gradually breaking up into small parties and scattering. It is stated that this great Indian village consisted of about 15,000 men, women and children, and that they had a pony herd of 40,000 animals.

Between 1876 and 1879, much talk was indulged in by the press and the general public about the battle of the Little Big Horn, which finally assumed such proportions, and was of such bitter criticism against Major Reno, that the latter demanded a



THE BLUFFS UPON WHICH RENO'S SECOND ENGAGEMENT WAS FOUGHT, WITH HIS OWN AND BENTEN'S BATTALION (LOOKING EAST). PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.



GRAVE OF LIEUT. DONALD M'INTOSH, 7TH CAVALRY. KILLED IN RENO'S RETREAT FROM THE TIMBER TO THE BLUFFS SHOWN IN DISTANCE (LOOKING EAST). PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

Court of Inquiry to investigate his conduct in the battle.

This was held in Chicago in January, 1879. Twenty-three witnesses were examined — officers of the 7th Cavalry, scouts, teamsters, packers and two or three non-commissioned officers. With the exception of two packers, all the witnesses came out in defense of Major Reno. The two packers testified that Reno was drunk and assaulted one of them. Major Reno and Capt. Benteen both testified that they had continually to drive skulkers out from the packs. Several witnesses were placed on the stand after the two packers had testified. These all declared that Major Reno was not drunk nor showed any sign of having taken liquor; that at no time he played the part of a coward or anything of the sort, but that he did his full duty as an officer and a soldier during the engagement.

Now, if the testimony of these officers and others is correct — and there is no reason for suspecting it to be otherwise — Major Marcus A. Reno, 7th Cavalry, was not only NOT a coward and was NOT drunk, either on the 25th or 26th days of June, 1876, while the battle of the Little Big Horn was in progress, but it would further appear that for fifty years he has been a greatly maligned man and soldier. Major Reno won a brilliant record in the Civil War for his bravery and skill in handling troops. The author is well aware that Reno was dismissed from the army about 1880 — it is said he engaged in a fist fight in a billiard room — but that has nothing whatever to do with his conduct at the battle of the Little Big Horn. In that alone are we interested, so far as this chapter is concerned.

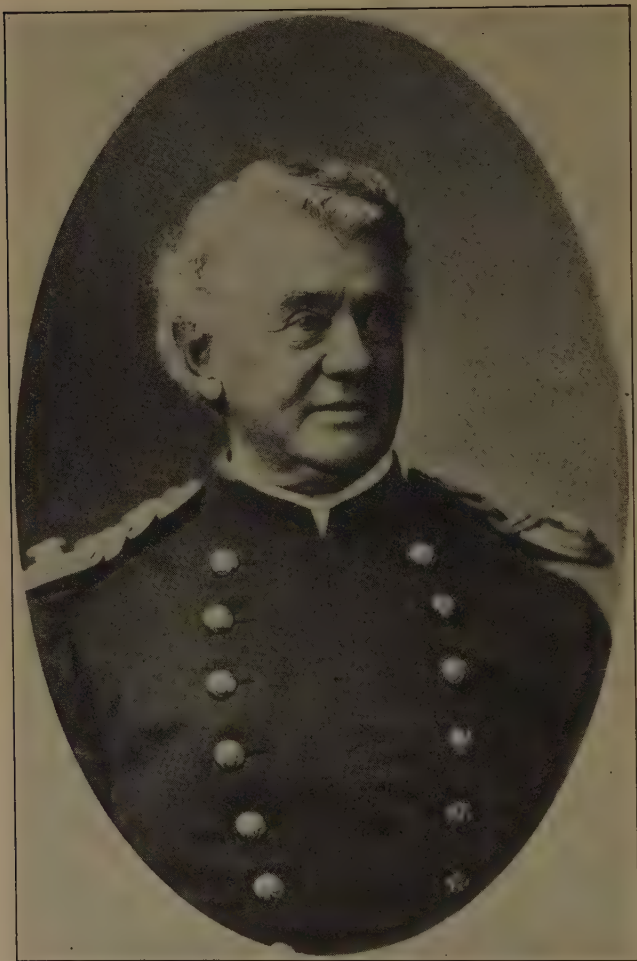
It happens that among the data which the author has been collecting for some twenty-five years on the Custer fight, is the complete stenographic report of the Reno Court of Inquiry, comprising nearly two hundred columns of testimony. The author has gone carefully through this and segregated all which bears on the conduct of Major Reno. As this report is official, it is a document which cannot be disputed or lightly passed over, and must be accepted as the truth — unless we foolishly brand the witnesses as liars. Some quotations from this may serve to alter the opinions of those who, perhaps, have been critics of Major Reno's conduct on the occasion of this greatest of Indian fights on the American continent.

Lieut. George D. Wallace testified as follows:

"Major Reno's conduct was all that could be expected of anyone. The troops could not have been handled any better. * * * I think Reno did the only thing possible under the circumstances. If we had remained in the timber, all would have been killed. It was his duty to take care of the command, and use his best judgment and discretion. * * * I can recall no act of Major Reno's during those two days that exhibited any lack of courage as an officer or soldier that I can find fault with, nor any lack of military skill."

Lieut. Charles A. Varnum said in his testimony:

"As to Major Reno's conduct — certainly there was no sign of cowardice or anything of that sort. * * * If Reno thought he could not hold the timber and saw no troops coming, it was for him to use his own judgment and leave it for a place he could defend better. * * * The position in the



CAPT. F. W. BENTEN, 7TH CAVALRY, WHO JOINED MAJOR RENO
ON THE BLUFFS AND FOUGHT IN RENO'S SECOND ENGAGEMENT.
PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.

timber was as good as any on the left bank, but I don't think that he (Reno) had men enough to hold it and keep the Indians out of it. * * * We could not have united with Custer except by going through the village to him, or his coming through to us. Neither force could have done that. * * * Certainly there was no sign of cowardice or anything of that sort. * * * If 1000 Indians had attacked Reno on his way from the timber to the river, he never would have got to the hill."

Dr. H. R. Porter, surgeon, with the Reno command, testified:

"I heard the adjutant give an order to Major Reno about one o'clock, June 25th. The adjutant told him that the Indians were just ahead, and General Custer directed him to charge them. *He said Custer would support him.* Reno asked if the general were coming along, and he said, 'Yes.'"

Capt. Myles Moylan testified:

"I am perfectly satisfied that Custer knew about our movement. Whether he followed us on the trail toward the crossing I don't know. I only knew by what Major Reno's adjutant told me *that he would be supported by Custer.* * * * The object of leaving the timber was, if possible, to save the command. * * * If we had stayed 30 minutes longer in the timber unsupported, I doubt whether we could have gotten out with as many as we did. We could not have successfully resisted the force of Indians if they had followed us to the river. We had not sufficient ammunition. The command was not, however, actually driven from the timber. * * * Major Reno gave his orders during the advance to the bottom as coolly as any man under

the circumstances. During the afternoon of the 25th he seemed perfectly cool. * * * I saw nothing in Major Reno which betrayed evidence of cowardice. There was a certain amount of excitement visible in his face, as in that of anybody else, but no trace of cowardice. * * * In my judgment if he had continued to charge down that valley, he would have been there yet. In my judgment the command, without assistance, would have been annihilated in the timber. If the Indians had followed and closed in on the retreat to the bluffs, the same result would have followed."

George Herendeen, citizen scout and interpreter, testified: ~

"About a mile and a half from the village I heard General Custer tell Major Reno to lead out *and he would be with him*. Those were the words I understood him to use."

Lieut. Luther R. Hare testified as follows:

"There were probably a thousand Indians opposing Reno in the bottom. (NOTE—Reno had just 112 men in his command, according to his own testimony.) If all the Indians had followed us they would have got us all. * * * If the Indians had charged the timber we could not have lasted long. We could have stood them off for perhaps thirty minutes. * * * Whether such an attack on the flank as Custer would have made would have supported Reno, would depend entirely on what disposition the Indians made. As it was, *it was no support at all and did not amount to anything*. The results of the battle show that. * * * Major Reno stayed in the timber *till all hope of support from Custer had vanished*. I think the reason we

left was because if we had stayed much longer — say 20 minutes — we could not have gotten out at all. * * * If the command had been pursued by the 1000 Indians who were about us, we would all have been killed. It would not have lasted ten minutes. * * * My impression of the retreat from the timber was that Major Reno thought we would be shut up there, and the best way to get out was to charge out. * * * I can only estimate his (Reno's) conduct by the way it turned out. I think his action saved what was left of the regiment. His conduct was always good. He seemed to be very cool at all times. * * * Of course Reno could form no estimate of his duties based on any action of Benteen unless he knew those orders.

* * * I saw Reno but once in the timber. * * * The disposition of the troops in the timber was a very good one. * * * If Reno had continued to advance mounted, I don't think he would have got a man through. The column would not have lasted five minutes. His dismounting and deploying was all that saved us. * * * I can't think Major Reno lost much time (after reaching the hill) in moving in Custer's direction. His column moved altogether about a mile or so. * * * I saw no evidence of cowardice on Reno's part. The command was under good control, and the disposition as good as possible under the circumstances. * * * Reno could not have seen the Indians in the coulee before he halted and deployed. I could not see them till they came out, and I was in a better position to see than he was. * * * If Gen. Custer saw us deploying, he could also have easily seen that there were five times as many Indians as



RENO'S CROSSING, LITTLE BIG HORN RIVER. IN JUNE THIS STREAM
IS FOUR OR FIVE FEET DEEP. PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

we had men. In my opinion if Major Reno could get away as he did, General Custer could, by leaving his dead and wounded, have gotten away also."

Testimony of Lieut. Chas. De Rudio:

"As soon as we cleared the woods, Reno called the battalion into line and moved at a gallop. He was ahead of us about fifteen yards. He was continually checking the men and keeping the horses in good order. * * * The line remained (after deploying) about ten minutes, during which time I saw Reno encouraging the men. He stood there and directed the fire. * * * I think Major Reno had more Indians around him the evening of the 25th than were in the attack on Custer. * * * I saw no indication of cowardice on Reno's part, nor any want of skill in the handling and disposition of the men. When he halted and dismounted I said, 'Good for you,' because I saw that if we had gone five hundred yards further we would have been butchered. * * * The effect of sighting Ben-teen's column was to check the Indians' pursuit of Reno."

Sergt. F. A. Culbertson testified:

"If the skirmish line had not been retired, or had been held there three minutes longer, I don't think anyone would have gotten off the line. I don't think Major Reno could have held the timber but a very few minutes. My estimate of the number of Indians about his position on the skirmish line and in the timber, is about 1000 to 1200. During the 25th and 26th I saw Major Reno several times in positions of great danger. * * * I saw no evidence of cowardice on the part of Major Reno at any time."

Testimony of Trumpeter John Martin:

"I saw Major Reno when we took position, and again that night at 12 p. m., when he sent an order to sound reveille at 2 a. m. Major Reno was in the center of the corral at reveille, and afterwards was around the skirmish line examining the position."

Testimony of Capt. F. W. Benteen:

"I showed Reno the order I had from Cook, and asked him if he knew where General Custer was. He said he did not; that he had been sent to charge those Indians on the plain, and that General Custer's instructions to him, through Lieut. Cook, were that he (Custer) *would support him (Reno) with the whole outfit.* * * * Reno was just as cool as he is now. * * * A movement could have been made down the river in the direction Custer had gone, but we would all have been there yet. * * * The Indians had picnic parties as large as a regiment standing around in the bottom looking on; there was no place to put them. Fully 2000 were around us, waiting for a place to shoot from. * * * I think his (Reno's) conduct was all right. I saw him every fifteen or thirty minutes those two days and during the night of the 25th was with him nearly the whole time. * * * I might have joined Reno in the timber, but would not have attempted it without first getting the pack train; but my losses would have been much greater. * * * There was not a foot of unoccupied ground in that country—there were Indians everywhere, from twelve feet to 1200 yards away. * * * I saw no evidence of cowardice on Reno's part. I found it necessary at one time to caution him about exposing himself. I told him to be careful how he



"CURLEY", ONE OF CUSTER'S CROW INDIAN SCOUTS, TAKEN ON CUSTER BATTLEFIELD IN 1913 BY E. A. BRININSTOOL. CURLEY DIED MAY 22, 1923.

stood around in front of the point, as volleys were coming constantly. * * * When I received my order from Custer to separate myself from the command, I had no instructions to unite at any time with Reno or anyone else. *There was no plan at all.* * * * I was separated from Reno fifteen miles when at the greatest distance. * * * Reno could not have expected me to join him. There were no orders to do so. * * * When I left, I did not know that Reno had any command; the division had not been made yet, and I don't think Reno knew anything about it at the time I left. When I passed him he asked me where I was going, and I told him I was going to the left, with instructions to pitch into anything I came across. The next time I saw Reno was on the hill. * * * *It was the belief of the officers on the hill during the night of the 25th that General Custer had gone to General Terry, and that we were abandoned to our fate.* * * * When I left, Reno had no command that I know of. Reno had no reason to think I was near or was following the same trail. I scarcely knew myself what I had to do. He had no right to expect any assistance whatever from me. * * * If there had been any plan of battle, enough of that plan would have been communicated to me so that I would have known what to do under certain circumstances. Not having done that, I do not believe there was any plan. * * * And if I found them (the Indians) the distance would have been so great that we would have been wiped out before he could get to us. * * * It would have taken me an hour and a quarter to bring up the packs after I got the Martin order. * * * The three orders I got

from Custer did not indicate that he expected me to co-operate in any attack on the village. * * *

But I am convinced that when the order brought by Martin reached me, General Custer and his whole command were dead. It was about 3 o'clock. * * *

From the orders I started out with, he (Custer) could not possibly have known where to find me within ten or fifteen miles. My going back was providential or accidental or whatever you may be pleased to term it * * * and I got there as soon as I could. * * *

From my orders I might have gone twenty miles without finding a valley; still, I was to go on to the first valley, and if I did not find any Indians, I was to go on to the next valley. *Those were the exact words of my order.* No interpretation at all. I was at least to go on to the second valley. I understood it as a rather senseless order. We knew there were 8000 or 10,000 Indians on the trail we were following, and it was scarcely worth while hunting up any more. * * *

Why I was sent to the left I don't know. It was not my business to reason why. I went. * * *

If I had carried my orders out I would have been at least twenty-five miles away. I don't know where I would have been. As it was, I was certainly too far to co-operate with Custer when he wanted me. * * *

His plan of attack was * * * known only to himself and not to Major Reno. * * *

The reason we moved down stream after I joined Reno was the presence of about 900 Indians on the other side, who seemed pretty vigorous and well-armed. I have never expressed an opinion adverse to Major Reno's conduct as an officer."



MAJOR MARCUS A. RENO, 7TH CAVALRY. COPYRIGHTED PHOTO
BY D. F. BARRY.

Testimony of Lieut. W. S. Edgerly:

"Major Reno's orders were to move down the valley and attack anything he came to; those were the orders I heard. Major Reno was not present when Benteen got his orders. * * * He (Reno) did everything that was necessary. * * * I saw Reno walk across the line as I saw other officers, and he seemed cool. * * * Major Reno exercised the functions of a commanding officer so far as I know. * * * I do not pretend to give the history of all Major Reno did — only my own personal knowledge. The nature of the fight was such that no special directions from him were necessary. I saw no evidence of cowardice on his part. I distinguish excitement from fear, most emphatically. * * * In the charge suggested by Capt. Benteen, Major Reno accompanied the troops; Capt. Benteen did not. * * * I believe Custer's command were all killed within 20 minutes, to a half hour from the time the Indians first attacked them."

Lieut. Edgerly (recalled):

"I saw Major Reno on the night of the 25th about 9 o'clock. He came along toward where I was from the direction of Capt. Benteen's line. *He was perfectly sober. No evidence that he had been drinking at all.* I saw him again at 2 o'clock, *and he was perfectly sober then.* I never heard the faintest suspicion of intoxication until I came to Chicago this time. If he had been intoxicated the officers would not have permitted him to exercise command."

Capt. Benteen (recalled):

"I may say I was with Major Reno all the time the night of the 25th. I saw him every fifteen to

twenty minutes till 3 a. m. I laid down in his bed. *He was as sober as he is now. He is entirely sober now and was then. There was no time during the 25th or 26th when there was any indication of drunkenness on the part of Major Reno.* He could not have been staggering and stammering without my knowing it. * * * I know nothing about any altercation with a packer except by hearsay. I know they robbed the packs and robbed me, and I also know there was not whisky enough in the whole command to make him drunk."

Testimony of Capt. E. S. Godfrey:

"I do not think Major Reno exhibited cowardice — rather, nervous timidity. * * * There was an impression among the men that Custer had been repulsed and had abandoned them. I had no such impression however."

Testimony of Capt. E. C. Mathey:

"I was in charge of the packtrain from June 22nd to the 28th. * * * We had 160 mules. I had about 70 men and four or five citizen packers. * * * I received no orders from Custer, Reno or Benteen on that march; only from Capt. McDougal. * * * I heard Major Reno say (on the hill) that we must try to find Custer, and something about going in the direction Custer had gone. * * * When Major Reno first came up he was somewhat excited, as any man would be under such circumstances. It was not long since he came out of the fight, and that would be the natural condition for a man to be in. I did not think to question his courage, and saw no act to indicate lack of courage or cowardice. * * * *I saw no drunk-*



"WHITE-MAN-RUNS-HIM", THE LAST LIVING CROW INDIAN SCOUT OF THE CUSTER CAMPAIGN OF 1876. PHOTO TAKEN IN 1924 ON CROW INDIAN RESERVATION, MONTANA, BY C. H. ASBURY.

eness on his part, and never heard any intimation of it until last spring."

Testimony of Capt. Thomas McDougal:

"I was commanding the rear guard, in rear of the packs. * * * I think it was about 4 o'clock when we reached Reno. * * * At the time Major Reno asked me to walk around with him, the fire was not ceasing — the bullets were flying fast. * * * As to Major Reno's conduct — when I found him he seemed perfectly cool; had nothing to say, and during the day I did not see him till he asked me to go around with him. He was perfectly cool then; he was as brave as any man there; they were all brave; no officer or man showed the white feather. * * * I think Major Reno would make as stubborn a fight as any man; men are different. Some are dashing, and others have a quiet way of going through. I think he did as well as anyone could do. * * * Reno had about 280 men, I think, after the forces joined."

Lieut. Wallace (recalled):

"I kept the itinerary. * * * I estimate the commencement of Reno's fight in the timber at 2:30 o'clock. Adjutant Cook's order to Reno was given about 2 o'clock, nine or ten miles from the place of division into battalions. I neither saw nor heard Custer give any order in person to Reno. * * * *I am positive that General Custer gave no order in person to Major Reno.* * * * Benteen got his order and moved to the left almost immediately after the separation — about two hours before the order to Reno."

Testimony of Major Reno:

"I was second in command, but was never con-

sulted at all. * * * About 10 o'clock Lieut. Cook came to me and said, 'The general directs that you take specific command of Companies M, A and G.' I turned and said, 'Is that all?' He replied 'Yes.' * * * I moved forward to the head of the column on an order from Lieut. Cook, and shortly after, Lieut. Cook came to me and said, 'General Custer directs you to take as rapid a gait as you think prudent and charge the village afterwards *and you will be supported by the whole outfit.*' * * * I took a trot and proceeded to carry out my orders. * * * My first thought was to make a charge with two companies and hold the third as a rallying point, but when I saw the number of Indians, I sent my adjutant to bring the third company on the line. * * * I saw I could not successfully make an offensive charge; their numbers had thrown me on the defensive. * * * I dismounted by giving the order to the company officers. * * * We were on the skirmish line under hot fire for 15 to 20 minutes. * * * It was plain to me that the Indians were using the woods as much as I was, and were scattering and creeping up to me. * * * After going down to the river and seeing the situation I knew I could not stay there *unless I stayed forever.* The regiment was scattered, or someone would have brought me an order, or aid. * * * At the time I was in the timber I had not the remotest idea where either the pack train or Benteen's column was. There was no plan communicated to us; if one existed the subordinate commander did not know of it. * * * I had made up my mind to go through those people (the Indians) and get to the hill, and get the regi-

ment together, so as to have a chance to save those who got through. There was no use of staying in the timber, where I could assist no one. I acted on my best judgment, and think events proved I was right. * * * My opinion is that 600 or 700 men (Indians) were there, *and I had but 112 men.* I thought it my duty to give those men the best chance I could to save themselves; and it was impossible to have a victory over the Indians. I thought it was my duty as a military movement, and I took the responsibility. * * * I felt sure that some of us would go up; we were bound to. Some would get hit, and I would lose part of my command. I was willing to risk that in order to save the lives of the others from the desperate situation we were in. * * * The Indians had Winchesters, and the column made a big target, and they were pumping their bullets into it. I did not regard the movement as a triumphant march, nor did I regard it as a retreat. When I reached the hill I thought it was as good a position as I could get in the time I had, and immediately put the command in skirmish line through the company commanders. * * * At the time I left the timber I did not see Benteen's column, nor had I the remotest reason to expect him to unite with me. * * * I selected the position (on the hill); it appeared to be the best I could get. I knew I would have to fight dismounted, and that I would have all I could do to take care of myself. * * * We hardly had time to dispose of the horses and get the men on the line before we were attacked in large numbers. * * * There was no protection whatever, except the greasewood — which was no protection

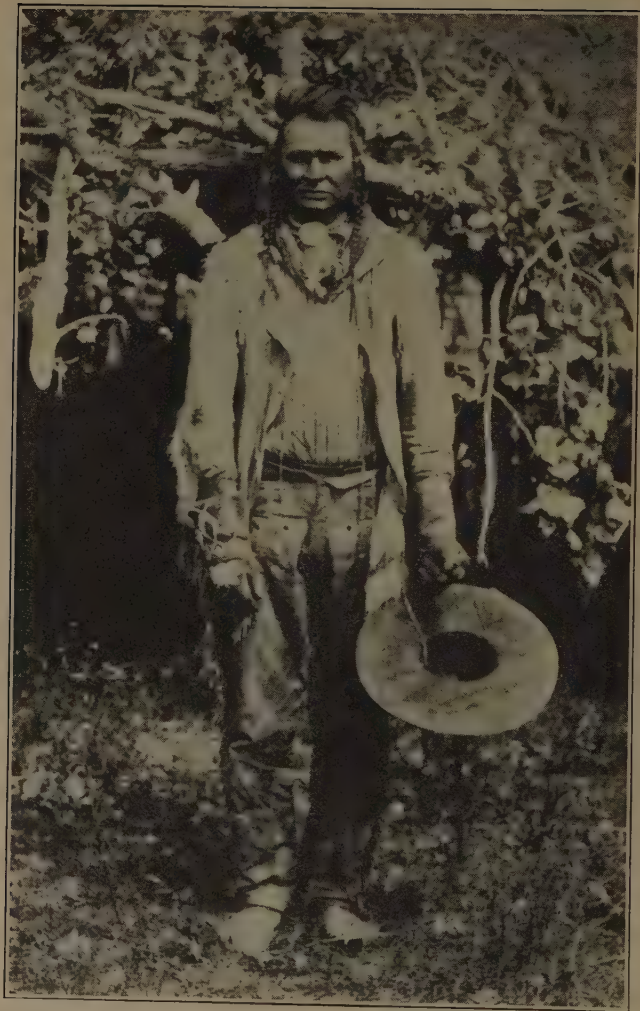


"MITCH" BOUYER, CELEBRATED HALFBREED SCOUT. KILLED WITH CUSTER'S COMMAND. FROM AN OLD PHOTO FURNISHED BY HIS DAUGHTER, MRS. MARY LITTLE NEST, CROW AGENCY, MONTANA, SHOWING BOUYER IN A TRIBAL COSTUME.

whatever. * * * There was not the slightest suspicion or belief that Custer had been destroyed. It was supposed he could take care of himself as well as we could. He had nearly as many men as I had — more than I had when I opened the fight. * * * I stated in my official report that I estimated the number of attacking Indians at about 2500. I think now that estimate is below the mark. I think they were all there on the hill. * * * Nothing that came to my attention on the 25th or 26th led me to suspect that Custer had been destroyed. * * * On the 25th I went around the line and found a great many skulkers in the packs and drove them out. I did this several times. * * * I never had any intimation that Benteen was to support me. I did not even know where he was. * * * My effort to communicate with Custer the night of the 25th was as much for my benefit as his. * * * I made an effort on the 26th to communicate with General Terry with a Crow scout. He took the note and left the lines, but came back shortly. I do not know what became of the note. I finally got one to Gen. Terry on the 27th. * * * When I say that no plan was communicated to me, I mean to the regiment. I do not think there was any plan. * * * My relations with General Custer were friendly enough, and if my own brother had been in that column I could not have done any more than I did. * * * I consider that I obeyed orders. I did not charge the village, but I went far enough to discover that it was impossible. Of course ten men could be ordered to charge a million. * * * I then knew nothing of the topography, but it afterward devel-

oped that had I gone 300 yards further, the command would have been thrown into a ditch ten yards wide and three or four feet deep. The Indians were in it, and the command never would have got that far. By the time they had got within a few yards, most of the saddles would have been emptied and the horses killed. * * * I did everything I could to assist and co-operate with General Custer — as much as if he were my own brother. I feel that I did everything possible, short of sacrificing my command. * * * There was no communication to me that Custer's command had been sighted from the timber. * * * When I retreated from the bottom I had no idea where Custer was. I knew he was not on the side where the village was, and if there was any chance for him to see me, it was on this hill."

In view of the fact that Major Reno has, in the eyes of the general public, been blamed for "not going to the rescue of Custer", all this mass of testimony is likely to show WHY certain phases of the Little Big Horn fight were not carried out according to what MAY have been Custer's battle plan — if he had any. It does not appear from the testimony that Custer DID have any — not, at least, until he sent his hasty message by Trumpeter Martin to Benteen to "come on." But Benteen was miles away when that message reached him, and was in no position whatever to assist Custer — or Reno, either, until he joined the latter on the hill. Then Reno had to wait until the pack-train arrived with the extra ammunition before making any move in Custer's direction. Reno's men had exhausted most



"WHITE-MAN-RUNS-HIM", ONE OF CUSTER'S CROW INDIAN
SCOUTS. PHOTO IN 1886.

of their cartridges in the fight in the river bottom, and it would not have been a diplomatic move to have tried to join Custer with no ammunition with which to assist him. And if Reno HAD left immediately when he got on the hill, the Indians at that end of the field might easily have gobbled the pack-train (with all the reserve ammunition, 24,000 rounds) if they saw it coming, which could hardly have been defended by the small number of troops with McDougal, who had it in charge. It is very doubtful if even 500 cavalrymen could have charged one mile through that Indian village, which was nearly four miles long and from a quarter to a half-mile wide.

The author is also well aware of the fact that Major Reno's private life has been assailed time and again. That, however, has no place in any criticism of his conduct in the Little Big Horn fight, and is, in the eyes of the author, an underhanded and despicable way of trying to "get back" at an officer whose bravery and skill in handling troops had never before been questioned. As to the charges of cowardice which have time and again, both in private and in public, been hurled at Major Reno, the testimony of his own officers who fought at his side, should be sufficient evidence of his ability and military skill on that occasion. Major Reno won a brilliant record in the Civil War for his bravery and proficiency in handling troops.

Further evidence that Major Reno's conduct at the battle of the Little Big Horn must have been such as call for no criticism from the officers and men under him, is shown in the following incident which took place just one week after the battle,

while the Seventh Cavalry was lying in camp on the Yellowstone River:

A petition was circulated and signed by 235 members of the Seventh Cavalry — practically the entire remnant of the regiment — and sent to Gen. Sherman, at Washington, to be presented to Pres. Grant and Congress, asking that Major Marcus A. Reno be promoted to lieutenant-colonel of the regiment, vice Custer killed, and that Capt. F. W. Benteen be made major, vice Reno promoted. As the author owns a photostat copy of the original petition, there certainly is no "joker" in it. Here is the petition in its entirety:

"Camp near Big Horn, on Yellowstone
River, July 4th, 1876.

"To His Excellency,

The President.

And the Honorable Representatives
of the United States.

"GENTLEMEN:

"We, the enlisted men, the survivors of the battle on the heights of the Little Big Horn River, on the 25th and 26th of June, 1876, of the Seventh Regiment of Cavalry, who subscribe our names to this petition, most earnestly solicit the President and Representatives of our country, that the vacancies among the commissioned officers of our Regiment, made by the slaughter of our brave, heroic, now lamented, Lieut.-Col. George A. Custer, and the other noble dead commissioned officers of our Regiment, who fell close by him on that bloody field, daring the savage demons to the last, be filled by the officers of the Regiment only. That Major M. A. Reno be our lieutenant-colonel, vice Custer killed; Capt. F. W. Benteen our major, vice Reno promoted. The other vacancies to be filled by officers of the regiment by seniority. Your petitioners know this is contrary to the established rule of promotion, but prayerfully solicit a deviation from



SITTING BULL, THE GREAT SIOUX MEDICINE MAN. HE TOOK NO PART IN THE LITTLE BIG HORN BATTLE PERSONALLY. PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.

the usual rule in this case, as it will be conferring a bravely-fought-for and a justly-merited promotion on officers who, by their bravery, coolness and decision on the 25th and 26th of June, 1876, saved the lives of every man now living of the Seventh Cavalry who participated in the battle, one of the most bloody on record, and one that would have ended with the loss of life of every officer and enlisted man on the field, *only for the position taken by Major Reno*, which we held with bitter tenacity against fearful odds, to the last.

"To support this assertion — had our position been taken one hundred yards back from the brink of the heights overlooking the river, we would have been entirely cut off from water; and from behind those heights, the Indian demons would have swarmed in hundreds, picking off our men by detail, and before mid-day, June 26th, not an officer or enlisted man of our Regiment would have been left to tell of our dreadful fate, as we would then have been completely surrounded.

"With the prayerful hope that our petition be granted, we have the honor to forward it through our Commanding Officer.

"Yours respectfully."

This petition bears the signatures of 235 members of the regiment, and was forwarded to General Sherman who did not present it to the President or to Congress, for reasons mentioned in General Sherman's reply, as follows:

"Headquarters Army of the U. S.

Washington, D. C., Aug. 5th, 1876.

"The judicious and skillful conduct of Major Reno and Captain Benteen is appreciated, but the promotions caused by General Custer's death have been made by the President and confirmed by the Senate; therefore this petition cannot be granted. When the Sioux Campaign is over, I shall be most happy to recognize the valuable services of both officers and men by granting favors or recommending actual promotion.

"Promotion on the field of battle was Napoleon's favorite method of stimulating his officers and soldiers to deeds of heroism, but it is impossible in our service because commissions can only be granted by the President, on the advice and consent of the Senate, and except in original vacancies, promotion in a regiment is generally, if not always, made on the rule of seniority.

"W. T. SHERMAN,
General."

It is obvious that had Major Reno been drunk or played the part of a coward, such conduct would certainly not have escaped notice; and it stands to reason that no such petition as the foregoing ever would have been signed by the survivors of the Seventh Cavalry had Major Reno been anything but a brave and prudent officer.

Until, therefore, some genuine proof is offered that the conduct of Major Reno was not in accordance with all the testimony brought out at the inquiry, which he demanded in 1879, (as well as by the testimony of other members of the Seventh Cavalry who did not testify at this hearing, but who have freely expressed their opinion in interviews with the author), he will back Major Reno to the last ditch.

Had things been reversed, and had it been Major Reno's command which were wiped out, instead of Custer's, it is not at all unlikely that Custer would have had the same charges thrown at him — of cowardice and failure to go to the rescue of Reno.

But it is obviously plain that neither Custer nor Reno were in any position whatever to assist each other — nor could they have been — according to the disposition of the command made by Custer

himself. There was Reno, with but 112 cavalrymen, many of them practically raw recruits, away at the upper end of that four-mile length of Indian tepees, swarming with nearly 5000 fighting warriors. There was Custer with five companies of cavalry, away at the lower end, and on the opposite side of the river. At the point where the Indian village was pitched, the river ran very close to the banks on the east side of the stream, which were very steep and high, and impossible of descent or ascent. Custer therefore had to make a long detour in order to reach the lower ford, so that he could attack the village at that end, while Reno was supposed to engage them at the upper end. Just where Custer expected Benteen to get into the fray is a puzzle. He was sent "to the left", and was miles away from both Custer and Reno, until after Reno had left his position in the river bottom, charged through the Indians surrounding him, and reached the bluffs on the opposite side of the stream, where he was joined by Benteen. Yet Benteen followed Custer's exact orders to the letter!

Who, then, is to be blamed for Custer's defeat? The reader must form his own conclusions.

There are yet (1925) four officers of the old 7th Cavalry alive who took part in the battle of the Little Big Horn. These are: Gen. E. S. Godfrey, Cookstown, N. J.; Gen. W. S. Edgerly, Coopers-town, N. Y.; Col. Chas A. Varnum, San Francisco, Cal.; Col. Luther R. Hare, Sherman, Texas.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF TRUMPETER MARTIN

BEARER OF CUSTER'S LAST MESSAGE FOR HELP RE-
COUNTS RIDE TO BENTEN FOR QUICK AID.

THE man who carried Custer's last message for reinforcements was John Martin, orderly trumpeter to the general on June 25, 1876 — this, in spite of the fact that probably a dozen men have appeared on the horizon in the last few years claiming the same distinction. They are all fakers, pure and simple. To Trumpeter Martin, and to him alone went that prominence.

John Martin died in Brooklyn, N. Y., December 24, 1922, and in his demise there passed a man who played a conspicuous part in the celebrated battle of the Little Big Horn; and John Martin was probably the last man of all the members of the Seventh Cavalry — except those who were killed with Custer — to see the general alive.

Pages have been written and much speculation has been indulged in as to why Custer received no reinforcements in his dire hour of need on that sagebrush-covered hill, where he and a handful of his dauntless troopers perished to a man in the greatest Indian battle in all the annals of our Western frontier. Major Reno has been blamed for "not going to Custer's relief", but nothing is said



TRUMPETER JOHN MARTIN. PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.
(126)

as to why Custer failed to go to Reno's relief, after ordering him to make the initial attack and promising him the full support of his (Custer's) five companies of troops. Custer's defeat was due to no negligence whatever on the part of Major Reno or any other officer of the Seventh Cavalry. They did exactly as Custer ordered them to do — save that Major Reno, with prudent judgment, refused to sacrifice his own command by carrying out an order which was as absolutely impossible to perform as if Custer had ordered him to capture the Indian village single-handed!

To what, therefore, was Custer's defeat due? The author is well aware that he is now treading on ticklish ground. Nevertheless, after an exhaustive study, covering over twenty-five years, of the battle of the Little Big Horn; after personal interviews with men who fought with the Reno battalion; after personally visiting the battlefield and going carefully over the ground; and after reading the complete testimony of the Reno Court of Inquiry, covering nearly 200 columns, and perusing everything written on the subject which was available, the question "Why was Custer defeated?" resolves itself — in the mind of the author, at least, to this:

It was due to his own lack of knowledge of the superior strength organization and arms of the Sioux; his own lack of knowledge of the lay of the land, and above all, his neglecting to scout the country thoroughly and march further south, as ordered, while awaiting the arrival of Generals Terry and Gibbon with the other troops of the expedition, and finally, separating his regiment into three battalions

all beyond supporting distance of each other, and attacking the Indians with wearied and played-out horses and men.

Custer's highest estimate of the number of Indians he would find in that village along the Little Big Horn, was 800. His own Crow and 'Ree Indian scouts warned him that he would find many times that number. "Mitch" Bouyer, a half-breed in charge of these Indian scouts as interpreter, told Custer he "would find Indians enough to keep him busy two or three days." Charley Reynolds, Custer's chief of scouts, and a plainsman of great fame, skill and renown, was greatly perturbed by the reports of the Indian scouts, and remained silent and reserved the night before the battle, as if anticipating the terrible fate in store for him the following day.

Custer had been instructed by Gen. Alfred Terry, the commanding officer of the expedition, to follow the Indian trail which Major Reno had discovered a few days before. But that if it led in the direction of the Little Big Horn — as it was thought almost certain that it would — he was *not to follow it directly, but to continue on further south, and thus give Generals Terry and Gibbon time to arrive on the ground with their infantry, artillery and few companies of cavalry.* Then, and not until then, Custer was to swing about and march north while Terry and Gibbon were marching south. They thus expected to entrap the Indians between the two commands, and persuade the red men to go back to their reservations or give them battle. Indeed, it turned out later — according to the reports of some of the leading chiefs in the fight, that had



CROW KING — PROMINENT SIOUX LEADER IN THE BATTLE OF THE
LITTLE BIG HORN. PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.

Custer waited until the other troops arrived, a battle doubtless would have been avoided.

Gen. Terry knew the impetuous, dashing make-up of Custer. He had tried to persuade him to take a battery of Gatling guns and some of the Second Cavalry to augment his own forces, but Custer had declined this tender. He said that he could whip any body of Indians he might run across, with the Seventh Cavalry alone, and that the Gatling guns would impede his progress.

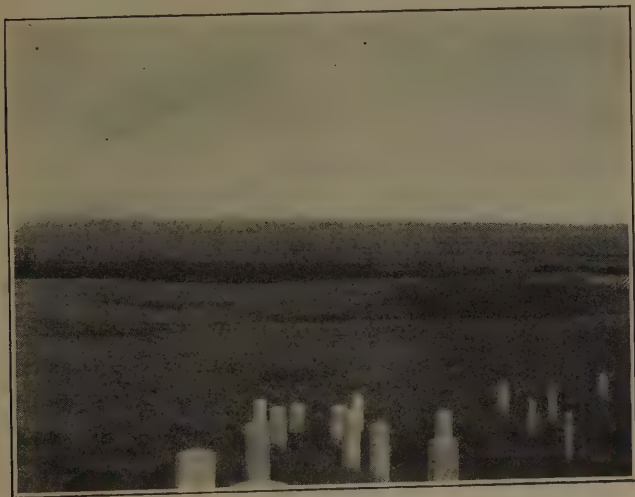
Gen. Terry warned Custer that the commands of Gibbon and himself could not possibly reach the scene of action until June 26th at the most, and that he was to so time his marching as to reach the valley of the Little Big Horn not sooner than that date.

But here was Custer — twenty-four hours ahead of the date he had been instructed to appear; a whole day in advance of the specified time he was expected to reach the valley of the Little Big Horn. Custer waited for nobody. With his characteristic impetuosity and dashing, daring manner, he clung to the Indian trail like a hound to the scent of a fox. He made forced marches, wearing out both men and animals, and without rest for trooper or beast, arrived on the ground a whole day ahead of the time designated.

The Indian village was strung along the Little Big Horn River for a distance of nearly four miles, and contained nearly 5,000 fighting warriors, and nearly 10,000 old men, women and children in addition. It was the largest assemblage of Indians ever found in one camp on the American continent. For weeks the young bucks had been slipping away



THE SCENE OF CUSTER'S LAST STAND, JUNE 25, 1876. PHOTO BY
E. A. BRININSTOOL.



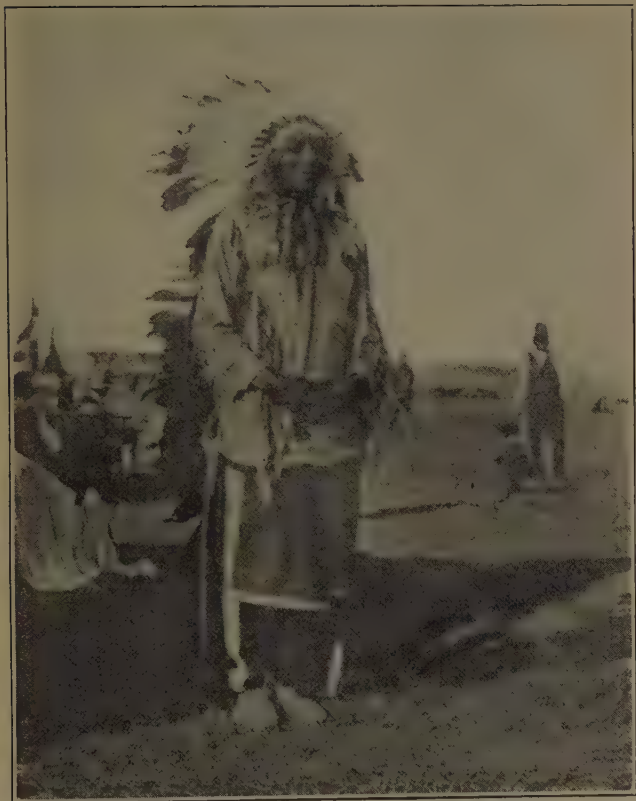
CUSTER BATTLEFIELD (LOOKING WEST) FROM SPOT WHERE CUS-
TER MADE HIS LAST STAND. PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

from their reservations, by twos and threes, and joining the hostile ranks of Sitting Bull, Gall, Crazy Horse and Crow King. Custer was not aware of this.

Fifteen miles from the scene of action, Custer made his first division of the regiment. To Capt. Benteen he gave three companies, with orders to "move to the left and pitch into anything you come across." To Major Reno he also gave three companies, with orders to "move forward at as fast a gait as you think prudent, charge the village *and we will support you.*"

Benteen moved to the left. With him — or rather, in his rear — came the pack train, carrying all the reserve ammunition — 24,000 rounds. Reno made his attack — but Custer did not support him. He and Reno moved forward together down a small tributary of the Little Big Horn, and when Reno crossed the river to attack the village, Custer, apparently changed his plans — if plans he had — and with his five companies, swung to the right, over bluffs and ravines, with the evident intention of attacking the village at its lower end. He never reached that point.

Benteen marched for many miles as ordered — to the left. No signs of Indians were discovered, and the lay of the land gradually forced him back into the trail made by Reno. He came in sight of Reno's command just as the latter was cutting its way through a thousand yelling, whooping, victorious savages — not in time to be of any assistance until Reno's shattered remnants, exhausted and "all in", had crossed the river and gained the bluffs on the other side of the stream.



CRAZY HORSE, A PROMINENT LEADING HOSTILE SIOUX CHIEF IN THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN. THE ONLY KNOWN PHOTO IN EXISTENCE OF THIS RENOWNED WARRIOR.

But how about Custer, anyway? Let John Martin himself tell the story. John Martin was the last man to see Custer alive of those who accompanied him into the fight. He was the orderly trumpeter for Custer that fatal day. For many years he was living in Brooklyn, N. Y., in retirement from service. He served in the United States Army continuously from 1874 to 1904, when he was retired as a sergeant. A fine old soldier, he, with a record of long and honorable service, and he gave two stalwart sons to the American army as well. He was an Italian by birth. Here is what Martin said in an interview granted to a friend of the author shortly before his death:

"The general (Custer) seemed to be in a big hurry. After we had gone about a mile or two (after the separation of the regiment) we came to a big hill that overlooked the valley, and we rode around the base of it and halted. Then the general took me with him and we rode to the top of the hill, where we could see the village in the valley on the other side of the river.

"We didn't see anything of Reno's column when we were on the hill. I am sure the general didn't see them at all, because he looked around with his glasses, and all he said was: 'We have got them this time.'

"Then the general and I rode back to where the troops were, and he talked a minute with the adjutant, telling him what he had seen. We rode on, pretty fast, until we came to a big ravine that led in the direction of the river, and the general pointed down there and then called me. This was about a mile down the river from where he went up on the



SURVIVORS WHO FOUGHT WITH RENO. LEFT TO RIGHT — CORPORAL HALL, DR. H. R. PORTER, CAPT. E. S. GODFREY, CAPT. F. W. BENTEN, CAPT. W. S. EDGERLY, CAPT. THOS. MCDOUGALL, PRIVATE ASPINWALL, CROW INDIAN SCOUT, "WHITE SWAN". PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY, JUNE 25, 1886, TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE.

hill, and we had been going at a trot and gallop all the way. It must have been three miles from where we left Reno's trail.

"The general said to me: 'Orderly, I want you to take a message to Col. Benteen. Ride as fast as you can and tell him to hurry. Tell him it's a big village, and I want him to be quick and to bring the ammunition packs.'

"He didn't stop at all when he was telling me this, and I just said to him: 'Yes, sir;' and checked my horse, when the adjutant said: 'Wait, orderly, I'll give you a message,' and he stopped and wrote it in a big hurry in a little book and then tore out the leaf and gave it to me.

"And he then told me: 'Now, orderly, ride as fast as you can to Col. Benteen. Take the same trail we came down. If you have time, and there is no danger, come back, but otherwise stay with your company.'

"In a few minutes I was back on the hill where the general and I had looked at the village. From here I could see Reno's battalion in action. It had not been more than ten or fifteen minutes since the general and I were on the hill, and then we had seen no Indians. But now there were lots of them riding around and shooting at Reno's men, who were dismounted and in skirmish line. I didn't stop to watch the fight. I had to get on to Col. Benteen, but the last I saw of Reno's men they were fighting in the valley, and their line was falling back.

"I continued on, and shortly I saw Col. Benteen's command coming. Soon I met him. I saluted and handed the message to him. He said: 'Where's the

general now?" I told him what the general said — that it was a big village and to hurry. I then joined my company with Benteen."

This was the famous message to Benteen for help. It was worded as follows: "Benteen, come on — big village — be quick — bring packs. P. S. — Bring packs."

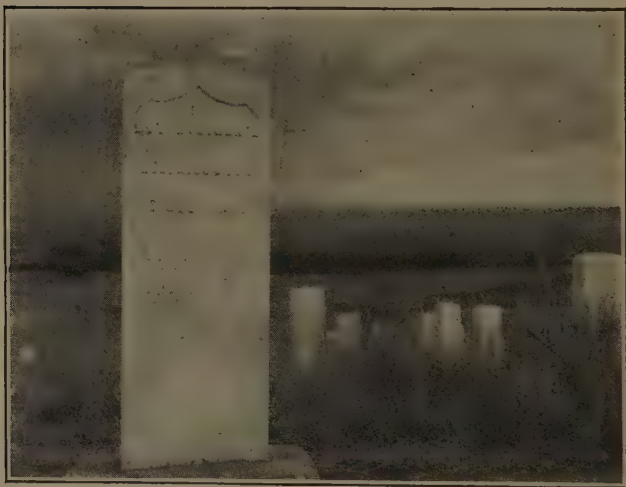
But Benteen was not able to carry out his orders. It was an utter impossibility for him to have done so. By that time Custer was beyond all aid. His part in the fight lasted, according to the best authorities, from twenty minutes to half an hour. Benteen was just able to reach Reno, and shortly their respective commands were surrounded by thousands of exultant, blood-thirsty and victorious Sioux. Go to Custer? They might as well have tried to reach the North Pole! There were — by actual measurement — just four miles and one hundred and sixty yards* of hills, gullies and ravines to cross, between Custer's position and that occupied by Reno and Benteen, with thousands of savages between the two commands. Reno did make an advance toward Custer's position. He went about one mile, and was driven back again with the swiftness of a tornado by the overwhelming odds against him.

Nobody knew the fate of Custer until Terry and Gibbon approached from the north on the morning of June 27th, and the Custer field was discovered by Lieut. James H. Bradley, in charge of the Indian scouts, who was riding three miles in advance of the command. Terry and Gibbon re-

*This is the official measurement made by Lieut. McGuire, of the Engineer Corps, two days after the battle.

lieved Reno and brought away all that was left of the Seventh Cavalry.

But there were no *Custer* "survivors". Of the Reno survivors there are quite a few, and John Martain, orderly trumpeter for Custer, was one of them. He was the last man to see his beloved general alive — the bearer of his last, urgent message for help — help which it was too late to give.



HEADSTONE OVER SPOT WHERE CUSTER FELL. CUSTER'S BODY WAS REBURIED AT WEST POINT. PHOTO BY E. A. BRININSTOOL.

CHAPTER V

TWO MODEST HEROES OF THE CUSTER EXPEDITION

DR. H. R. PORTER AND CAPT. GRANT MARSH, AND THE
IMPORTANT PARTS THEY PLAYED.

IN all the accounts which have been written of the battle of the Little Big Horn, but little mention ever has been made of the prominent parts taken by two modest heroes of Custer's last campaign, Dr. H. R. Porter, a surgeon who accompanied the command, and Capt. Grant Marsh, of the steamer "Far West", the boat chartered by the government to carry supplies for the expedition to the head of navigation.

Dr. Porter was detailed to accompany Major Reno's battalion, after Custer had divided his forces. When Reno made his charge out of the timber for the high hills across the Little Big Horn River, several men were left behind in the excitement and confusion. Dr. Porter was one of this number.

He was administering to a dying soldier in a little clump of bushes, after the command had worked back into the timber along the stream. Charley Reynolds, Custer's beloved scout, had just been shot dead, after shouting a warning to Dr. Porter that the Indians were shooting at him. The doctor's

orderly had departed, and he was totally unarmed. The main command had passed on the run, and the surgeon was left alone, with all escape seemingly cut off.

The din of battle was sounding all about him — the whoops of the victorious savages, the crack of carbines and the shouts of the charging cavalrymen. The trooper to whom Dr. Porter was administering, had given his last gasp, and then the surgeon realized the extreme danger of his own position. Bullets were cutting the brush all about him, and the alarm of death was sounding on every hand.

In some unaccountable manner Dr. Porter managed to reach the river bank, leading his horse, unharmed. Indians dashed past within ten feet of him, but paid no attention to him, whether because he was unnoticed in the smoke and dust clouds or because the savages were too intent on reaching the front, where the mass of the troopers were.

The doctor's horse was a powerful black animal, which, frightened by the firing and the yells of the Indians, plunged and reared as if mad. The doctor realized that if he lost his hold on the bridle rein, his chances of escape were absolutely gone, and that death would be his portion if the horse broke away before he could get into the saddle.

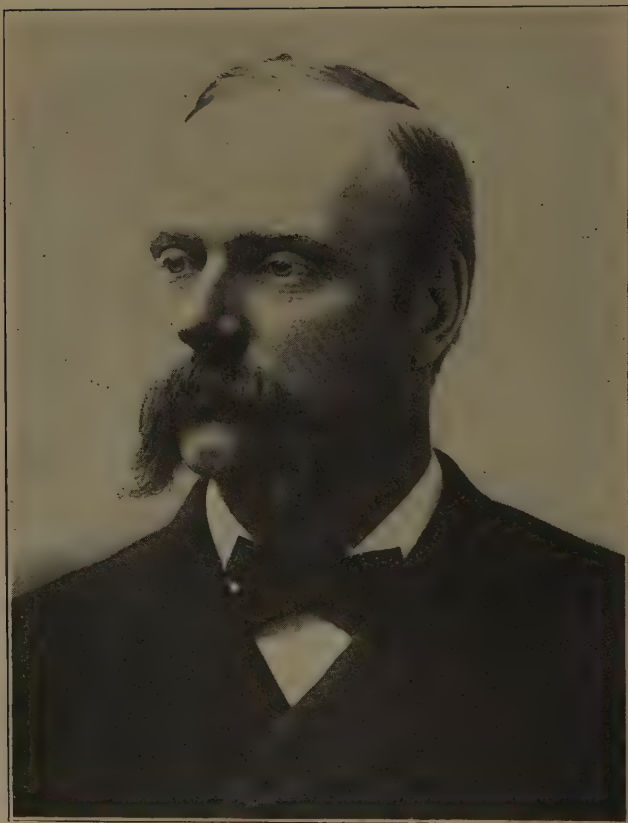
Leap after leap did the surgeon make to gain his seat on the animal's back, but the horse was so badly frightened that it reared and plunged from side to side, evading his efforts for some time. Finally, by one supreme effort, Dr. Porter managed to get one foot in the stirrup. Away flew his charger like the wind, the rider gained the full seat, and, leaning low across the animal's neck, ran a gauntlet

where the chance of escape was but a thousand to one.

The black charger with its low-lying rider was quickly detected as it fairly flew toward the river, and a storm of leaden hail fell about them. Dr. Porter had absolutely no control of his mount, but the animal was bearing him toward his friends and safety. It was only a half mile at the most to the river crossing, and the frenzied animal reached that point in safety, dashed madly into the stream, and though a rain of rifle balls was showered about the pair, the animal splashed through, rushed up the opposite bank and gained the Reno command. Horse and rider were saved. It was destiny.

Throughout the afternoon of June 25th, as well as all that night and during the 26th, Dr. Porter was conspicuous for his utter disregard of hostile bullets. There was no other surgeon. Dr. De Wolf, another physician who had accompanied the Reno command, had been killed while climbing the bluffs in the retreat from the river bottom. Dr. Porter was but 26 years of age, yet he performed all his tasks with the coolness and courage of a seasoned Indian campaigner, working in such a heroic manner, as to call forth the admiration of the entire command.

When General Terry and General Gibbon arrived on the field, early on the morning of June 27th, there were fifty-two wounded men in the Reno command to be carried many miles on hand-litters down to the steamer "Far West" lying at the mouth of the Little Big Horn. From there they were to be carried as fast as steam could urge the boat, to Bismarck, nearly one thousand miles away, down



DR. H. R. PORTER. PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.

rivers filled with treacherous sand bars and innumerable snags and other dangerous obstacles.

Captain Grant Marsh—the gamest, nerviest pilot that ever ran a boat on the Missouri River—had already performed an exploit unequaled in the history of steamboating in the West, when he pushed his noted craft up to the mouth of the Little Big Horn, to be as near Custer as possible with supplies and extra ammunition. The news of Custer's defeat had already been brought to the boat by "Curley", one of the Crow scouts loaned to Custer by General Gibbon, "Curley" had succeeded in escaping from the battlefield (doubtless before the actual fighting began).

Captain Marsh, therefore, was well prepared to accommodate the wounded men as far as the size of his boat would allow. Grass had been cut along the river bank and thickly strewn over the deck to serve as a mattress, and heavy tarpaulins were laid over this. The wounded troopers were then tenderly carried aboard and laid out in rows, and Dr. Porter was detailed to accompany them on the down-river trip to Bismarck, although he had been working without sleep ever since the battle.

The "Far West" was in a strange land and on an unknown river, for it must be understood that that section of country in 1876 was as unknown as the heart of Africa. The Little Big Horn River was scarcely more than a creek, full of dangerous turns and curves, and Captain Marsh keenly felt the great responsibility which rested upon his broad shoulders. Precious lives were in his keeping. The utmost skill would be required to carry these gallant wounded heroes to their destination without acci-

dent. The steamboat had been fully "wooded up", and everything was ready for the long race with death.

Before the order came to cast off the lines, General Terry was closeted with Captain Marsh for some moments in the latter's cabin. The general instructed the veteran steamboat captain to use all the skill at his command, as there were treacherous rivers to navigate the entire distance. First, there was the Little Big Horn to traverse down to the Big Horn itself; thence, the course would be down the Big Horn to the Yellowstone; thence, down the Yellowstone into the Missouri. It was indeed a long and circuitous route which had to be followed. General Terry told Captain Marsh that every wounded man on his boat "was the victim of a blunder — a sad, terrible blunder."

It was about daylight on the 30th of June when Captain Marsh was ready to start with his precious cargo. His engineer was George Foulk, a veteran at the levers, and the pilots were Dave Campbell and Captain Marsh himself, with Mate Ben Thompson as second in command. All these men deserve the utmost praise and commendation for the skill and knowledge of navigation they displayed on that remarkable run.

When the boat had started down stream, Captain Marsh gave orders to keep up a full head of steam — "to the very limit of safety". It was fifty-three miles to the mouth of the Big Horn River where it emptied into the Yellowstone, and Captain Marsh was kept busy dodging in and out among the numerous islands which infested the Big Horn, and

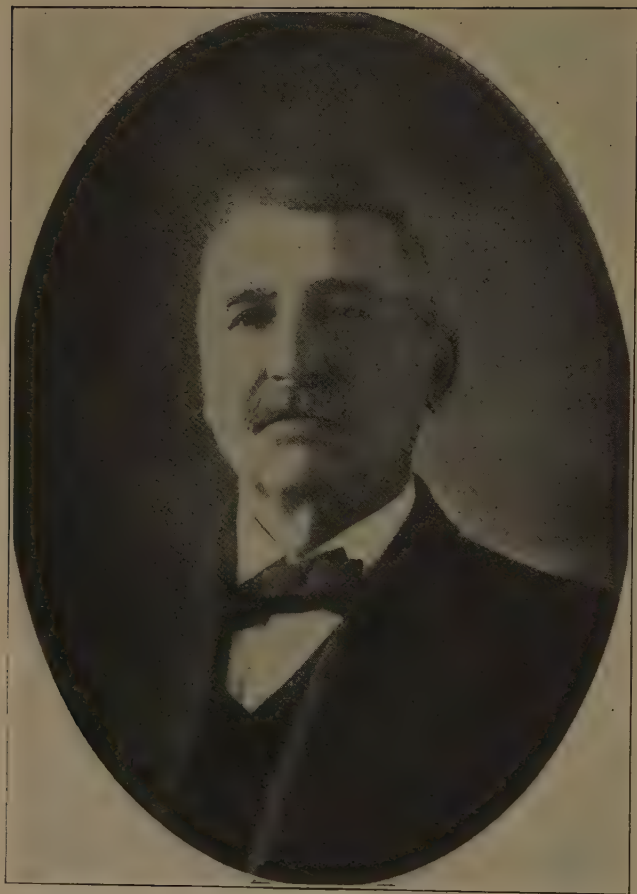
as he had been over the route but once before (on the up trip) to such a point, it required all the skill at his command to keep the boat in the channel of the narrow stream.

However, late in the afternoon the steamer safely reached the Yellowstone and tied up to the bank where General Gibbon's wagon train was parked. Here the boat was obliged to lay until late in the afternoon of July 3d to ferry Gibbon's command over to the opposite bank of the river, that officer's column not arriving until July 2d.

By this time fourteen of the wounded men had so far recovered as to be able to be carried ashore and remain with Gibbon's command. It was about 900 miles from this point to the destination of the "Far West".

About 5 o'clock on the afternoon of July 3d, the steamboat headed down the Yellowstone. Under ordinary conditions no craft ever traveled at night on this stream, because of the snags and sandbars which they were likely to encounter, and because of the ever-shifting channel of both the Yellowstone and the Missouri; but there was to be no tying up at dark with Captain Marsh on this trip.

It so happened that the Yellowstone was carrying a good volume of water, but, nevertheless, it was no child's play to drive a steamboat at twenty miles an hour down a channel, which was perilous enough in the daytime and under ordinary conditions. The boat was rushed through the water under a full head of steam, and on some occasions was so crowded for speed that the steam-gauge reached the danger mark.



CAPT. GRANT MARSH, MOST NOTED STEAMBOAT NAVIGATOR OF
THE MISSOURI RIVER. COMMANDER OF THE "FAR WEST".

Captain Marsh and Dave Campbell took turn about at the wheel in four-hour shifts. Down below in the engine room, sooty and begrimed firemen fed wood into the fireboxes until the boat quivered from stem to stern under the force with which she was driven through the water, while the shriek of the "Far West's" whistle re-echoed between the cliffs, sending herds of deer, elk and buffalo on wild stampedes. Occasionally the bottom of the boat came in contact with a rock just below the surface, or struck a projecting snag, with such force as to throw the deck-hands off their feet. Sometimes the nose of the little craft would seemingly be on the point of burying itself in the bank, when a lucky turn of the wheel would bring the boat about so that her sides would scrape along the bank of the stream. It was a wild race with death, and Captain Marsh was taking every possible chance in order to get his cargo of human lives into the hands of doctors and nurses in the least possible time.

Meantime, Dr. Porter was having his hands full, walking up and down between the rows of wounded troopers, soothing a suffering man here or ministering to a groaning trooper there. He worked without interruption and without rest, and only one man died on the trip.

Finally the "Far West" raced out into the broader Missouri River. At Fort Buford a stop of but a moment was made to land a wounded Indian scout. The boat put off again before questions were half answered by the excited people who crowded to the boat and begged for news of the awful disaster. Down the Missouri spun the "Far West" once more

until Fort Stevenson was reached, where a brief halt was made. At this point Captain Marsh draped the derrick and jack-staff of the boat in black, under orders from General Terry, in honor of the dead and wounded.

This was on the afternoon of July 5th, and at 11 o'clock that night, the "Far West" bumped against the wharf at Bismarck, after a trip of nearly one thousand miles in just fifty-four hours, having established a record never before or since equaled by any other craft in the history of steamboating on the Missouri River or any of its tributaries.

Hardly had the "Far West" touched the wharf before officers and men were running up the streets to arouse the sleeping populace. The news of the appalling disaster fell like a thunderbolt among them. The news could hardly be believed. C. A. Lounsberry, editor of the Bismarck "Tribune", was aroused from his sleep, with J. M. Carnahan, the only telegrapher in the little frontier city. With Captain Marsh, Dr. Porter, Colonel Smith and others, they hurried to the telegraph office, where Carnahan sat down to the key and scarcely raised himself from his chair for over twenty-two hours. The remarkable piece of telegraphy done by this modest "knight of the key" who yet lives in Missoula, Montana, was one of such magnitude as to call for the highest commendation. Lounsberry wrote his story as given to him by Dr. Porter and others, and Carnahan clicked it over the wires to the New York "Herald" as fast as it was handed him. More than 15,000 words were transmitted, and it cost the "Herald" over \$3000 in telegraph tolls—but it was worth

it! Stories like the Custer battle did not materialize every day in the week!*

To the tireless efforts of Dr. Porter and Captain Grant Marsh, the highest possible credit and commendation should be given. Both men passed away several years ago, but they will ever be remembered by those who know and realize the value of their courage and bravery.

*While the Bismarck Tribune has always contended that it sent the first news east of the Custer disaster, Andrew J. Fisk, whose story is related in Chapter VII, in correspondence with the author several years ago, took issue with the claims of the Tribune. Mr. Fisk has since died. The reader must form his own conclusions after reading both stories.



STEAMER "FAR WEST", GRANT MARSH, CAPTAIN. THE MOST HISTORIC CRAFT THAT EVER PLIED THE MISSOURI RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES. IT PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE INDIAN CAMPAIGN OF 1876.

CHAPTER VI

WAS THERE A CUSTER SURVIVOR?

SOME INTERESTING INFORMATION FROM GEN. E. S.
GODFREY (RETIRED) FORMER CAPTAIN
SEVENTH U. S. CAVALRY.

D ID any human being escape death of those who accompanied the five troops of the Seventh Cavalry, under personal command of Gen. George A. Custer, in the fatal battle of the Little Big Horn?

For fifty years this has been a greatly discussed question. Time and again men have come into the limelight to claim that they were with the Custer forces, and that they alone escaped death. To the knowledge of the writer, fourteen men have, at various times since that remarkable engagement with the Sioux, claimed that they accompanied the Custer command when it went into action, and each claimant stated that he, and he alone, escaped from the battlefield alive.

None of them, however, have been able to prove their claims, and their stories are without foundation. One Alfred Chapman has for years claimed that he was Custer's guide, but that for reasons for which there is not the space here to go into details, claimed that he was not with the Seventh Cavalry when it went into action, but that he was on his way to join the command and only reached

the vicinity in time to watch the battle through a spy-glass a mile away, from behind the sagebrush, and that he there saw the Custer command killed to a man!

The writer, through various authentic sources, including the War Department, proved in a public statement to the H-T-T, that the man was an impostor, and the editor of the magazine invited him to come forth and back up his assertions, which he never did. It was shown that no man by his name served with the Seventh Cavalry in any capacity whatever, much less chief guide of the expedition, which distinction belonged to Charley Reynolds, whose courage, skill and frontiersmanship had been tried to the core by Custer on numerous previous occasions. Many officers, yet alive, who served with the Reno command, became interested in the discussion. Records were searched, but the name of Alfred Chapman could not be found — not even as a mule whacker! None of the officers of the Seventh Cavalry ever heard of the man, and Mrs. Custer herself, in a personal letter to the author, thanked him for unmasking the impostor and branding his claims as preposterous and absolutely false.

When General Custer partly divided his forces, he personally took command of Troops C, E, I, F and L. It consisted of about 208 officers and enlisted men. Of this entire command none was ever seen alive again, with the single exception of "Curley", one of the Crow Indian scouts who had been loaned to Custer by General Gibbon, on June 22d, when Custer left the main body of troops. It has always been alleged that Curley escaped from the battle in the



GENERAL E. S. GODFREY, 7TH CAVALRY.

dust, smoke and general confusion, by disguising himself in a Sioux blanket. This claim is absurd. The Sioux were not overlooking anybody on that particular day, and if Curley ever did make such claims, they can be taken with several grains of salt. Curley's get-away was obviously made before the actual fighting commenced.

But did any white man — soldier, officer or civilian scout or packer, — escape alive?

During the early part of 1921, the author received a most interesting letter from Gen. E. S. Godfrey, now residing at Cookstown, N. J., who, in 1876, was a captain in the Seventh Cavalry, and who accompanied Benteen's command when Custer separated the regiment. The movements of both Benteen's and Reno's battalions are familiar to most students of our Indian wars. Reno attacked the upper end of the great Indian encampment, which, it was later learned, contained nearly or quite 15,000 men, women and children, of which, it has been variously estimated, from 3500 to 5000 were fighting warriors.

Reno's command consisted of just 112 men. He went into the battle confidently, and with the promise of the support of Custer and his five troops of cavalry. He received no support whatever from Custer, who left him in an attempt to reach the lower end of the village and attack it at that point, without giving Major Reno any notice of the move. Reno fought gamely until he saw that he was being surrounded by over a thousand of the savages, when he ordered his men to mount, charge through the Indians and gain the high bluffs across the river, a mile distant, and there make a stand where there

was a better chance of success than in the thick timber and underbrush along the river. On the bluffs Reno was joined by Benteen's battalion.

In this movement, Major Reno lost about thirty men. Captain Godfrey was with the Reno forces on the hill all through the fighting of June 25th and throughout the following day, until at the approach of the commands of Generals Terry and Gibbon, the Indians struck camp, drew off and scattered. The Custer and Reno dead were buried on June 27th (as decently as was possible with the few implements at hand) and the wounded, fifty-two in number, were brought down to the steamboat "Far West", lying at the junction of the Big and Little Horn, a few miles north of the battleground, and carried down to Bismarck, Dakota, and Fort Lincoln, opposite Bismarck.

In his letter to the author, Gen. Godfrey stated that in connection with the escape of anyone in Gen. Custer's command, he wished to make record the following:

"About the last of July or the first of August, 1876, Gen. Terry moved his command from Pease Bottom down the Yellowstone River, opposite, and just above, the mouth of the Rosebud. Here some infantry troops were ferried to the south side of the stream.

"Soon after, I heard a rumor that they had found a dead horse that was fully equipped, except bridle, and that it was a Seventh Cavalry horse. I went to the steamer at once to investigate. I crossed to the south bank of the stream and found the horse. It was impossible to determine if it was a sorrel or light bay animal. Halter, lariat, saddle, saddle-



GEN'L. GEORGE A. CUSTER.

blanket and saddle bags were intact; and strapped to the cantle was the small grain bag with which the Seventh Cavalry had provided itself. The oats in the bag had not been disturbed. The saddle bags were empty. I was told that when first discovered the carbine of the rider was there. The horse had been shot in the forehead, which must have been fatal on the spot.

"While I was examining the equipments for some identification, the steamer whistled for the return trip, and I had to leave and get back to camp. The next day I returned to continue my investigation, but found that the horse had been stripped. The animal was lying on its left side, and where the body touched the soil was so decomposed that the brands could not be identified. Endeavors to locate the taken equipment were in vain, and I never learned any thing further, either of horse or rider.

"Here was the one chance that I know of where a man may have escaped the fate of his comrades. I have met several who claim to have escaped, and have heard of many others, but never one who identified himself by this incident.

"Respectfully,

(Signed) "E. S. GODFREY.

"Cookstown, N. J., May 2, 1921."

General Godfrey further added in his letter:

"In the last few months, only four more 'living survivors of Custer's command' have cropped out."

In compiling the list of killed of the Custer command, every officer was accounted for with the exception of Lieutenants Harrington, Porter and Stur-

gis, whose bodies never were found, at least, not recognized. Nothing was ever learned of their fate, and while it has always been supposed that they were killed, but possibly not identified, yet, it is not beyond reason that all or one of them may have escaped, badly wounded, to die in some out-of-the-way place. Some writers have insisted that they were doubtless captured alive and tortured to death that night in the Indian village, which was flushed with its bloody victory over Custer. The Sioux, however, always have maintained that they took no prisoners on the occasion of the Little Big Horn fight.

Who rode the solitary animal found dead by Captain Godfrey a few weeks after the Custer fight, on the lonely banks of the Yellowstone River, which carried Seventh Cavalry equipments? Was its rider one of Custer's men, and who was he?

CHAPTER VII

A GREAT NEWSPAPER "SCOOP"

HOW THE FIRST NEWS OF CUSTER'S LAST FIGHT
WAS MADE PUBLIC.

ONE of the greatest newspaper "scoops" or "beats" ever made in modern journalism was on July 4th, 1876, at Helena, Montana, when Andrew J. Fisk, at that time Associated Press correspondent and general newspaper writer, first gave to the world the fate of General George A. Custer and all of his immediate command, who were wiped out on the banks of the Little Big Horn River, Montana, on June 25th of the Centennial year, by the Sioux and allied tribes under Chiefs Gall, Crow King, Crazy Horse and Two Moons.

News gathering fifty years ago had not been brought down to as fine a point as at the present day. There were no telephones, automobiles, bicycles or other means of rapid transit, and news dissemination by telegraph, even, was almost in its infancy. The West was a comparative wilderness, teeming with Indians, outlaws and tough characters in general; railroads were few and the country bordering on Montana and Wyoming was but sparsely settled.

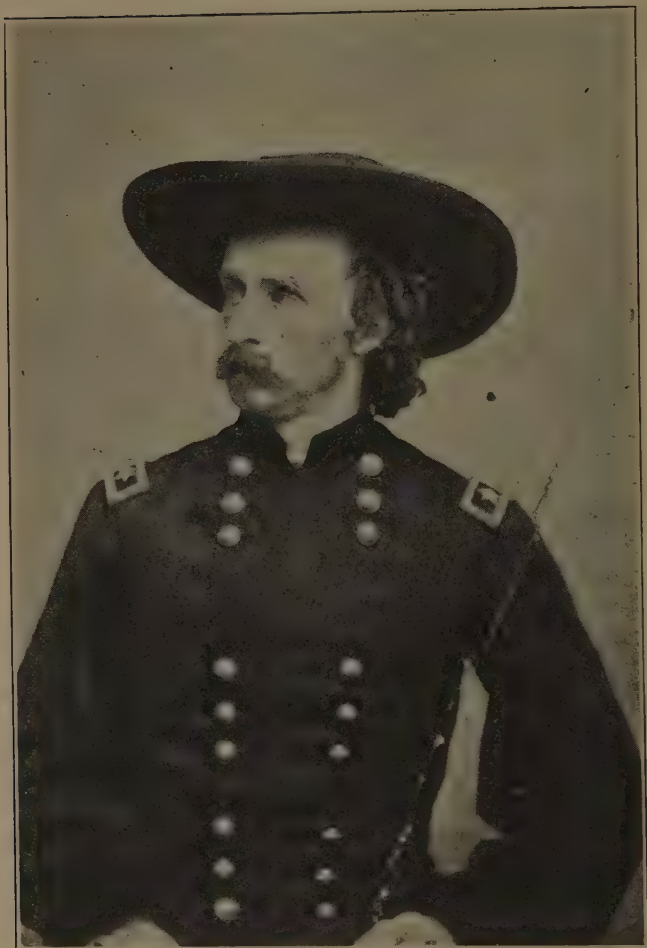
Nine days had elapsed from the time Custer met his fate before the information was spread broadcast through the medium of the press, and a longer time doubtless would have elapsed but for the pluck

and grit of a rancher on the Yellowstone River named Horace Countryman, himself an old Indian fighter and scout of the early days. Countryman rode 180 miles with but one change of horses to reach Helena and spread the tidings of Custer's fate.

At that time Countryman lived at Stillwater, an old stage station on the Yellowstone. To Countryman's ranch arrived "Muggins" Taylor, a scout from the battlefield on the Little Big Horn. Taylor was completely exhausted and unable to proceed until the next day, having barely escaped with his life after leaving the battlefield. He was discovered and pursued by a band of Indians, and but for the fact that he managed to guide his horse to the junction of the Big and Little Horn Rivers, where the supply steamer, "Far West", was waiting for orders from General Terry, in command of the expedition, Taylor would have been overhauled and killed, as his horse was completely winded when soldiers on the boat caught sight of him dashing toward them, firing his revolver to attract attention, while in close pursuit came a bunch of Sioux Indians, who drew up and retired into the hills upon seeing that their quarry was in safe hands.

Noting Taylor's exhausted condition upon his arrival at Stillwater, Countryman volunteered to bring the news to Bozeman, where he supposed he would be able to find a government wire and rush the news to Washington.

But when Countryman, on a foam-flecked horse, dashed into Bozeman, he found the government wire down and useless. There was nothing to do but



GEN'L. GEO. A. CUSTER. FROM A WAR TIME PHOTO BY BRADY.

continue on to Helena. Securing a fresh mount, Countryman scurried away, and arrived in Helena about noon on the Fourth of July, "all in" and fairly fainting from the exhaustion of his long ride.

On legal holidays, in those times, newspaper editors were not so eager to spread their pages before their readers, consequently the force of the *Helena Herald* was out "celebrating" the day and the office was closed.

It was about 12 o'clock, noon, that Andrew J. Fisk left his home and went down town to see if there was anything of news importance to wire the Associated Press. Idly sitting in his office, talking with some friends, he was suddenly startled by the appearance of a dusty, begrimed rancher, who fairly tumbled from his saddle in front of the *Herald* building, staggered up the steps and reeled into Fisk's office. It was Horace Countryman. As he dropped into a chair, Fisk sprang to his side, exclaiming:

"Countryman, old friend, what in God's name is the matter? What has happened?"

Countryman could but gasp in reply: "Custer's command all wiped out on the Little Big Horn by the Sioux!"

Fisk was horror-struck, but grasping immediately the vital importance of the news he said:

"Have you told anybody about it, except we folks here in this office?"

"Not a soul," whispered Countryman, with a shake of the head.

"Boys," exclaimed Fisk, turning to his friends, "not a word of this on the street to anybody. This

is the biggest scoop of the year!" Then turning to Countryman, he added:

"Come into my private office and give me the details as you have them."

A brief conversation ensued, then Fisk said: "You stay here and I'll go out to a restaurant and get you a bite, and also see if I can't scare up enough of the force to get out an extra."

Fisk hurried across the street, and quickly returned with coffee and sandwiches. Then he rushed back, from one saloon to another, and in a short time managed to round up a sufficient number of the composing room force of the *Herald* to answer his purpose. These men hastily began to distribute type and get ready to spread a piece of news that was calculated to make all Helena gasp with dismay and horror.

Fisk then hurried into his own private office, where Countryman had revived himself with food, and then closing and locking the door, the newspaper man began to take down in long-hand the thrilling recitals of the battle as conveyed to Countryman by "Muggins" Taylor, the scout. Countryman dictated rapidly and fluently.

"There was one sentence in particular that struck me forcibly," said Fisk, in recounting the story. "It was this:

"'Curley, the Crow scout, and the only person in the battle who escaped to bring the news, said the firing was very rapid, and sounded like the snapping of the threads in the tearing of a blanket.'"

As fast as Fisk was able to dash off his copy he



"RAIN-IN-THE-FACE", A LEADING SIOUX CHIEF IN THE BATTLE
OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN. PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.

hurried the pages up to the composing room, where the foreman, separated them into "takes" which the compositors rapidly turned into type. Fisk was so excited that he forgot all about his duty to the Associated Press, and then became mindful of the fact that he was not even a member of the staff of the *Herald*. By the time the *Herald* extra was on the street, it came over Fisk that the important part of his duty was not yet accomplished, and he made a bee-line for the Western Union Telegraph office, where the manager, W. E. Frederick, dropped everything he was sending over the wires and gave Fisk a clear wire to Washington to spread the tidings in the East.

On the night of July 4th, Fisk began to be besieged by telegrams from Eastern newspapers, begging, and in some instances demanding further news from the front. James Gordon Bennett of the New York *Herald*, soon after midnight, wired Fisk authority to employ scouts and get them to the front with all possible despatch, sparing no expense, for the full particulars of the disaster.

Other papers wired for "just a little longer story," and Fisk thereupon wired the Associated Press that he had already given out all the information which had been received, and that it was an utter impossibility to get further news from the battlefield by way of Helena, and that doubtless the next dispatch would come from Bismarck, Dakota.

It was not until nearly midnight of the 5th, however, that news from the battlefield arrived in Bismarck and official notification was sent to the government.

To Andrew J. Fisk, therefore, went the credit of having given to the public the first news of the greatest tragedy of Indian warfare on the Plains — due to the pluck and endurance of Horace Countryman.*

*See footnote end of Chapter V.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW THE CUSTER BATTLEFIELD WAS DISCOVERED

LIEUT. JAMES H. BRADLEY, CHIEF OF SCOUTS FOR GIBBON'S COMMAND, FIRST MAN TO VIEW
CUSTER VICTIMS.

FOR fifty years much speculation has been indulged in and many stories have appeared as to the actual conditions which existed on the Custer battlefield, when the remains of the Custer command were discovered, early on the morning of June 27th, two days after the battle. Many writers have stated that all the bodies were most fiendishly and shockingly mutilated, scalped and otherwise disfigured; other reports are that all the bodies were stripped; yet others, that the remains of the gallant Custer himself were not respected by the Sioux, while many writers have contended that Custer's body was in no wise disfigured because of the fact that the Indians respected his bravery.

The author is in possession of a copy of a letter written for and printed in the Helena Herald, under date of July 25, 1876, — just four weeks following the fight. It was written by Lieut. James H. Bradley of the Seventh Infantry, chief of scouts for General Gibbon, the latter having expected to meet Custer and the Seventh Cavalry about June 26th on the Little Big Horn River and assist in the battle which

was confidently looked for between the Sioux and the combined forces of Terry, Custer and Gibbon.

Custer, however, did not await the arrival of Terry and Gibbon. He appeared, ready for the conflict twenty-four hours ahead of the time he had been expected. His approach having been discovered by the Sioux, he either had to attack or see the Indians slip from his grasp. He chose to attack. Capt. Benteen was ordered to the left, into country which precluded him from the fight until Reno was corraled upon the hill. Major Reno was ordered to attack the upper end of the great Indian village, in which he was promised the support of Custer and his force. This he did not get. Custer may have expected to assist Reno, but such a plan — if plan Custer had — was not carried out. Custer could not reach a ford where he could cross the river and attack the ~~upper end of the great Indian village, in~~ ^{gone} ~~gone~~ ^{up} stream nearly four miles on the east bank of the river. Reno, meantime, struck the upper end of the camp, but seeing at once that he had got into a hornet's nest, and that a charge through the village from his end of it, would mean the utter annihilation of his command, he did the only thing that could be done under the circumstances — ordered a retreat across the river to the high bluffs, where his command would have some show for their lives — which they would not have had by remaining in the timber along the river.

By this time Custer had been annihilated—or was being wiped out about the time Reno's men were straggling up the bluffs. After the Custer command had been completely destroyed, the Indians returned again to the attack on Reno. But the



LIEUT. JAMES H. BRADLEY, 7TH INFANTRY, DISCOVERER OF THE CUSTER MASSACRE, AND THE FIRST PERSON TO VIEW THE BATTLEFIELD AFTER CUSTER'S ANNIHILATION.

troopers put up such a stubborn resistance that the Sioux withdrew on the afternoon of June 26th, noting the dust cloud indicating the advance of Generals Terry and Gibbon from the north.

Meantime the Reno contingent were all wondering what had become of Custer. It was generally supposed that he had been obliged to retreat, and had doubtless joined Gibbon. Therefore, when the commands of Terry and Gibbon appeared it was supposed that Custer would be with them. That he had been defeated was the last thing on earth the Reno command had any thought of.

Lieut. James H. Bradley had accompanied the command of Gen. Gibbon as his chief of scouts. Under date of July 25, 1876, written in camp on the Yellowstone River, Lieut. Bradley sent to the *Helena Herald* the following interesting communication. It sets at rest all disputes as to the condition of Custer and his command when found, and is a most valuable document regarding the actual condition on the Custer battlefield, seen by the real discoverer of the disaster.

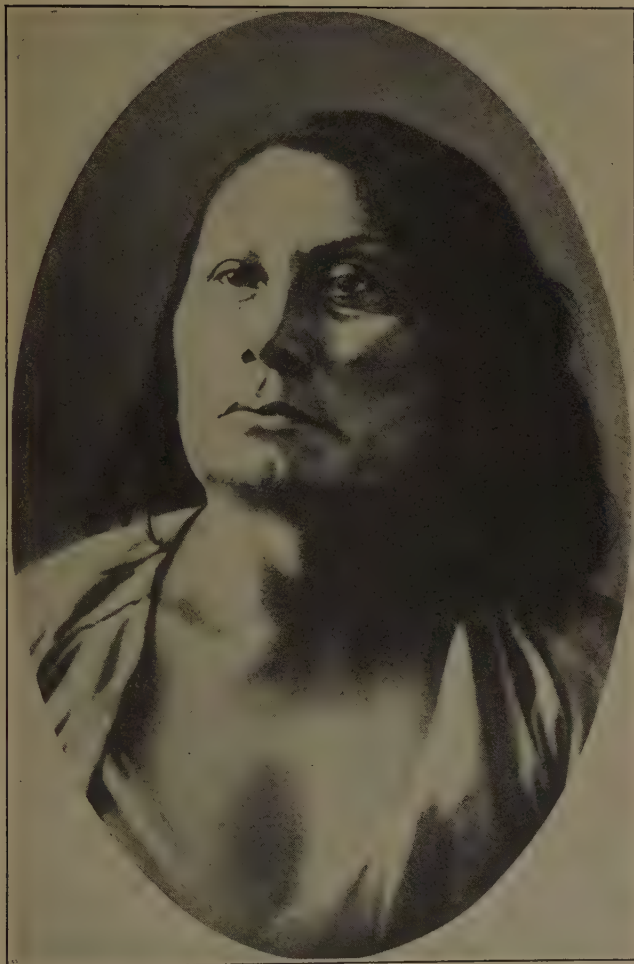
"In the presence of so great disaster as that which overtook the regular troops on the Little Horn, and the consequent excited state of the public mind, and its eagerness to get hold of every detail, however minute, of that unfortunate affair, it is to be expected that many stories of a sensational character, having no foundation in truth, would obtain with the public. Of such a character is that now going the rounds of the press to the effect that the Sioux removed Custer's heart from his body and danced around it—a story related upon the authority of one Rain-in-the-Face, a Sioux chief who

participated in the fight, and afterward returned to his agency.

"Of the same character also is the sweeping statement as to the general shocking mutilation of the bodies of the soldiers who fell on that occasion. The bare truth is painful enough to the relatives and friends of these unfortunate men, without the cruel gratuitous exaggeration of their grief that must come from the belief that they had been horribly mutilated after death. It therefore seems to me worth while that these stories should receive emphatic contradiction, and being in a position to make such denial, I address you this letter with that object.

"In my capacity as commander of the scouts accompanying Gen. Gibbon's column, I was usually in the advance of all his movements, and chanced to be upon the morning of June 27th, when the column was moving upon the supposed Indian village in the Little Big Horn valley. I was scouting the hills some two or three miles to the left of the column, upon the opposite bank of the river from that traversed by the column itself, when the body of a horse attracted our attention to the field of Custer's fight, and hastening in that direction the appalling sight was revealed to us of his entire command in the embrace of death. *This was the first discovery of the field*, and the first hasty count made of the slain resulted in the finding of 197 bodies reported to Gen. Terry.

"Later in the day I was sent to guide Col. Bennett of the Seventh Cavalry, to the field, and was a witness of his recognition of the remains of Cus-



GALL, PROMINENT SIOUX WAR CHIEF IN CUSTER'S LAST BATTLE.
PHOTO BY D. F. BARRY.

ter. Two other officers of that regiment also were present, and joined in their identification, and as all had known him well in life, they could not be mistaken, and the body *was wholly unmutilated*. Even the wounds that caused his death were scarcely discovered (though the body was entirely naked) so much so that when I afterward asked the gentlemen whom I accompanied whether they had observed his wounds, they were forced to say they had not.

“Probably never did a hero who had fallen upon the field of battle appear so much to have died a natural death. His expression was rather that of a man who had fallen asleep and enjoyed peaceful dreams, than of one who had met his death amid such fearful scenes as that field witnessed, the features being wholly without ghastliness or any impress of fear, horror or despair. He had died as he had lived—a hero, and excited the remark from those who had known him, and saw him there, ‘You could almost imagine him standing before you.’ Such was Custer at the time of his burial on the 28th of June, three days after the fight in which he had fallen, and I hope this assurance will dispose of the horrible tale of the mutilation and desecration of his remains.

“Of the 206 bodies buried on the field, there were very few I did not see, and beyond scalping, in possibly a majority of cases, *there was little mutilation*. *Many of the bodies were not even scalped*, and in the comparatively few cases of disfiguration it appeared to me as the result rather of a blow with a knife, hatchet or war-club to finish a wounded man, than deliberate mutilation. Many of Custer’s men must have been disabled with wounds during the

fight, and after the savages gained possession of the field, all such would probably be mainly killed in the manner indicated. The bodies were nearly all stripped, but it is an error to say that Kellogg, the correspondent, was the only one that escaped this treatment. I saw several entirely clothed — half a dozen at least — who, with Kellogg, appeared to owe their immunity to the fact that they had fallen some distance from the field of battle, so that the Indians had not cared to go to them, or had overlooked them when the plundering took place.

“The real mutilation occurred in the case of Reno’s men who had fallen near the village. These had been visited by the squaws and children, and in some instances the bodies were frightfully butchered. Fortunately, not many were exposed to such a fate. Custer’s field was some distance from the village, and appears not to have been visited by these hags, which probably explains the exemption from mutilation of those who had fallen there.”

Lieut. James H. Bradley, at the time of writing the foregoing communication, was one of the best-known officers in the regular army — a writer of distinction, a keen observer and whose word is beyond dispute. He was killed the year following the Custer fight, while serving in the campaign against the Nez Perce Indians, at the battle of the Big Hole in Montana, while gallantly leading his men in a charge against the savages. Had he lived, history would have been greatly enriched by the manuscripts which he had under way. He kept a daily diary of the movements of his own command, the Seventh Infantry, from the time it left Fort Ellis, Montana, until the arrival of the command on the

ill-fated Custer field, which disclosed the slaughtered troopers, and it teems with thrilling interest.

To Lieut. James H. Bradley, therefore, history is indebted for the actual discovery of the conditions existing on the Custer battlefield. All other stories are those recounted by men who saw the field after Lieut. Bradley had reported what he discovered.

CHAPTER IX

THE CUSTER BATTLE HEROES

HOW TWENTY-FOUR TROOPERS OF THE SEVENTH CAVALRY WON THE COVETED MEDAL OF HONOR IN THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN.

THAT greatest of Indian fights on the American continent, which occurred June 25-26, 1876, known variously as "Custer's last battle," "The Custer Massacre," and the "Battle of the Little Big Horn," developed many heroes, but none to whom the title is more apropos than the twenty-four troopers of the Seventh Cavalry who won Medals of Honor for extraordinarily-hazardous duty during the two days of this remarkable and thrilling engagement.

After Major Marcus A. Reno's command had recrossed the Little Big Horn River, from the stand of timber, where he had vainly, but heroically, attempted, with only 112 men (many of them raw recruits) to hold the Sioux hordes in check, and not receiving the promised support from Custer's command, he sought a more defensive position on the high hills on the east side of the stream. Reno's thrilling charge through about one thousand yelling savages who had surrounded his position in the timber, was a most desperate fight for life every inch of the way. But it was the only possible chance of saving his command, and he gamely and con-

scientiously took it, in preference to remaining in the timber, where certain annihilation would have been his portion had he retained the position many minutes longer.

As it was, Reno lost twenty-nine men killed and many wounded before he reached the hills, nearly one mile east. Here he was joined by Captains Benteen and McDougall, who, with the pack-train, carrying all the supplies and extra ammunition (some 24,000 rounds) had been sent by Custer off to the left at the time he divided his command. The pack-train was some miles behind Benteen's column in charge of Captain McDougall, and it was nearly an hour after Reno reached the hills before the pack-animals arrived. Lieutenant Hare, however, had succeeded in getting some of the ammunition mules hurried forward to Reno prior to this. The Reno command was, therefore, now well supplied with ammunition.

After Reno had crossed the river, the Indians suddenly left off attacking his command, instead of following it up to what undoubtedly would have been certain defeat for him had the Indians continued harassing him then, and swarmed down stream to concentrate their entire force against Custer, who, after Reno had started to attack the upper end of the great Indian camp, evidently decided that Reno could cope with the situation there, and started down stream, apparently looking for a ford where he could cross and attack the lower end of the village, containing approximately 15,000 souls — men, women and children. Although this village was known as "Sitting Bull's camp", that doughty warrior — or, to be strictly correct — great medi-

cine man, had nothing to do with the fighting on the occasion of this great battle, but fled indiscriminately at the rattle of the first bullets of Reno's men through the tepees.

Why Custer failed to give Reno the promised support never will be known. If he had a battle plan he kept it to himself, or it may have materialized after Reno left him. At any rate, Reno was left to do the best he could alone.

Custer was quickly repulsed and his command wiped out to a man. The Indians, flushed with their easy victory, then once more turned their attention to Reno's command, which had occupied the time during the attack on Custer, to fortify themselves as well as circumstances would permit.

After the Indians had Reno once more completely surrounded, the fighting was terrific during the balance of the afternoon of June 25th — in fact, until 9 o'clock that night, as darkness came late in that section in June, while daylight appeared shortly after 2 in the morning. On the 26th the fighting again opened with redoubled fury, raging until nearly dark, when the savages, noting the approach of General Terry's troops up the Big Horn River, withdrew and scattered.

But during these two days of incessant and terrific warfare against a savage and relentless foe, twenty-four men of the Seventh Cavalry proved the mettle they were made of. Not that they were the only heroes of the battle of the Little Big Horn, but because they performed service of such a conspicuous character as to clearly distinguish them above any others — service that involved extreme jeopardy of life, and the performance of extraor-

dinarily hazardous duty, thereby qualifying for and winning the Medal of Honor, awarded by the United States government only for bravery and gallantry above their comrades. It is right and fitting, therefore, that the names of these men should be written high on the scroll of fame.

After the ammunition mules had reached Major Reno's troops and his entire command had been served, a movement was made down stream in an attempt to either join Custer or to learn his fate. Reno's men, however, were set upon and driven back to their original position on the high hills.

During this retreat, one of the ammunition mules became frightened and stampeded straight toward the Indian lines. The animal carried two thousand rounds of cartridges, and it was highly important that this should not fall into the hands of the enemy.

Sergeant Richard P. Hanley, of C Troop, who had been detailed with the pack-train, therefore dashed forward after the frightened animal, urging his horse straight toward the Indian lines on the dead run, in an effort to head off and capture the mule before the Indians could gather in both mule and ammunition. "For fully twenty minutes, and under a most galling fire," reads the Medal of Honor government report, Hanley raced up and down between the two lines, with the bullets falling about him like hail, kicking up the dust around his horse's hoofs, while officers and troopers alike yelled and shouted at the intrepid and daring sergeant to 'let up and come on in.' But Hanley disregarded all commands and pleadings. He was determined to recapture that mule, and finally did so, escaping uninjured, and bringing the obstreperous animal back to the



THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR.

pack-train with the ammunition intact, to the accompaniment of the whoops and cheers of his comrades. For this nervy act, Sergeant Hanley was, on October 4th, 1878, awarded the Medal of Honor.

Sergeant Benjamin C. Criswell, of B Troop, also won the Medal of Honor "for rescuing the body of Lieutenant Benjamin Hodgson from within the enemy's lines, bringing up ammunition under a heavy fire and encouraging the men in the most exposed positions."

Sergeant Thomas Murray, of B Troop, brought rations to his hungry comrades on the firing line, passing to and fro several times through the fire of the enemy. This was on the 26th. On the previous day Murray had distinguished himself by bringing the pack-train within reach of the command and into a comparatively sheltered position—all this under a heavy fire from the Indians. For this gallantry Sergeant Murray also was rewarded with the Medal of Honor, October 5th, 1878.

Corporal Charles Cunningham, also of B Troop, was shot through the neck during the fighting on the 25th. Despite repeated orders to retire from the firing line, he pluckily refused to leave, and fought bravely throughout the entire engagement, saying that he "could do better on his belly with a gun in his hand on the firing-line, than on his back among the helpless in the rear." For his gallantry and pluck, he also was awarded the Medal of Honor, October 5th, 1878.

Private Henry Holden, of D Troop, repeatedly went for ammunition to supply the firing line, all the while exposed to a merciless fire. Again and again he brought up cartridges that the carbines of

his comrades might be continually kept belching lead into the ranks of the savages. His Medal of Honor was likewise awarded October 5th, 1878.

On the 26th, lack of water for the wounded finally became a desperate question. They were begging and pleading for it, and the situation was critical in the extreme. The day was scorching hot, and by noon the officers determined that heroic measures must be resorted to in order that the wounded might be supplied with the precious fluid for which they were so feverishly entreating.

Nineteen men volunteered to go for water. Four of them — Sergeant George H. Geiger of H Troop; Blacksmith Henry W. B. Mechling, Private Charles Windolph and Saddler Otto Voit, of H Troop — all expert marksmen, were detailed by their captain to take an exposed position outside the line and protect, as much as possible, the men who went to the stream for the precious water. They were instructed to keep up an incessant firing into the brush on the opposite side of the stream, where hordes of the savages were lying in wait with the expectation that the time would come when the troopers would be compelled to make a dash for water. These marksmen naturally drew the fire of the Indians, and bullets rained around them; but these four heroes pluckily held their exposed position nearly four hours, and it was due to their vigilance, reckless exposure of person and incessant and expert marksmanship, that none of the water-carriers were killed by the Indians, although one — Peter Thompson — was shot through the hand, but courageously went for water two or three times after receiving the wound.

The water carriers took with them several iron camp kettles, slipping singly from the right wing of Captain Benteen's line, and making a dash for the river. For some eighty yards before reaching the stream they had to traverse an exposed place, which brought them under the fire of the enemy. At this point they were enabled to obtain the shelter of a ravine which led down to within about fifty feet of the Little Big Horn River.

Then, while the four sharpshooters, from their exposed position above them, kept their carbines belching lead into the brush, the men would rush from the ravine, hastily dip their kettles into the stream and dash back to its shelter. The Indians were quick to divine the intent of the troopers, and the brush on the opposite bank of the Little Big Horn was ringed with the smoke from their guns, as they vainly attempted to shoot down the daring water carriers. But for the vigilance and skill of the four sharpshooters, doubtless many of the men would have been killed. There were many narrow escapes, however, and several of the camp kettles were perforated.

The names of these courageous water carriers who thus won the Medal of Honor (the sharpshooters were similarly honored) are: Neil Bancroft, Troop A, Seventh Cavalry; Abram J. Brant, Troop D, Seventh Cavalry; Thomas J. Callan, Troop B, Seventh Cavalry; Frederick Deetline, Troop D, Seventh Cavalry; Theodore W. Golden, Troop G, Seventh Cavalry; David W. Harris, Troop A, Seventh Cavalry; William M. Harris, Troop D, Seventh Cavalry; Rufus D. Hutchinson, Troop B, Seventh Cavalry; James Pym, Troop B, Seventh Cavalry;

Stanislaus Roy, Troop A, Seventh Cavalry; George Scott, Troop D, Seventh Cavalry; Thomas W. Stevens, Troop D, Seventh Cavalry; Frank Tolan, Troop D, Seventh Cavalry; Peter Thompson, Troop C, Seventh Cavalry; Charles H. Welch, Troop D, Seventh Cavalry.

There has been considerable discussion in various magazines and publications regarding the weapons used by both the Indians and the Seventh Cavalry in the battle of the Little Big Horn. Some writers have contended that the cavalry were armed with repeating rifles, naming the Spencer seven-shot carbine, generally, as the weapon employed against the Sioux.

This is an error. The Seventh Cavalry, in 1876, were armed with the 45-70 single-shot Springfield carbine. It was not a dependable arm at all. The extractor would often refuse to throw out the exploded shell after a few rounds had been fired, which immediately rendered the weapon useless. The author is supported in his statement regarding the type of arm used by Custer's men at the Little Big Horn fight, by Col. Chas. A. Varnum, yet living in San Francisco, who, under date of May 26, 1924, wrote as follows:

"My dear Mr. Brininstool:—

Yours just received. We used the 45 caliber Springfield carbine in 1876, with 70-grain ammunition. No, Spencer carbines or rifles were not used in the regiment in my day. When I joined, in 1872, we were armed with Sharps carbines, and some of the troops had three kinds of carbines for experimental purposes, viz: Ward-Burton, 50-caliber, Springfield, 50-caliber and Remington, 50-caliber, but in

1876 we all had Springfield 45's. I never saw but one Spencer in my life, and that was an old worthless gun that someone picked up.

"Very truly yours,

"CHAS. A. VARNUM."

The weapons used by the Indians were vastly superior to those used by the troops in every way, being Henry repeating rifles, 44-caliber; Winchester Model 1873 repeating rifles, as well as some Sharps single-shot weapons and some also carried bows and arrows.

Another great error made by artists and moving picture companies who have attempted to depict "Custer's last fight" on canvas and screen, is in showing the Seventh Cavalry fighting with sabers. Custer is generally shown by the movie people (who never come within a mile of the truth in their weak attempts to portray the Custer battle) as standing in the center of a devoted little band, with a huge saber in one hand and a revolver in the other.

As a matter of fact — and please bear this in mind — there was not a sword or saber in the entire Seventh Cavalry on the occasion of the battle of the Little Big Horn. Not even an officer carried one. If anyone doubts this assertion he is referred to "Custer's Last Battle", the article written by Gen. E. S. Godfrey, and published in "The Century" of January, 1892. He there says: "*The men were armed with carbine and revolver; no one, not even the officer of the day, carried the saber.*"

As both Colonel Varnum and General (then Captain) Godfrey played prominent parts in the battle of the Little Big Horn, having fought with the Reno battalion, their statements are beyond all discussion.

CHAPTER X

THE STORY OF "COMANCHE"

THE LONE HORSE THAT ESCAPED DEATH IN CUSTER'S
LAST BATTLE.

WHILE Custer's last fight on the Little Big Horn River, in southeastern Montana, is generally mentioned as "the battle of no survivors", this is not literally true.

One horse, "Comanche", the animal ridden by Capt. Myles W. Keogh was the "sole survivor" of the Custer column.

Comanche was a claybank gelding, and had been purchased by the Government in the spring of 1868, at St. Louis, along with other horses, for cavalry use. This particular animal was sent to the Seventh Cavalry, then stationed in camp near Ellis, Kansas. Comanche at that time was four or five years old. He was assigned to Troop I.

When General Sully's expedition against the southern Indians was organized at Fort Dodge, Kansas, in September, 1868, Capt. Myles Keogh was acting inspector general on Sully's staff. He was attracted by Comanche's looks, and chose the animal for his field mount.

During one of the engagements of the Seventh Cavalry with Comanche Indians, on the Cimarron River—or the Beaver Fork—the horse was wounded while Keogh was riding him. It was from

this particular engagement that he received the name of "Comanche".

Captain Keogh at once became greatly attached to the horse, which was thereafter known as "the captain's mount", and Keogh was riding him in the battle of the Little Big Horn.

It will be remembered that Major Reno was surrounded on the high bluffs on the east side of the Little Big Horn River after his retreat from the river bottom, where his first engagement occurred. On these hills the Sioux maintained a constant siege from the afternoon of June 25th until late in the afternoon of the following day, when, noting the approaching troops of Generals Terry and Gibbon (who were to meet Custer about June 26th somewhere in the valley of the Little Big Horn) the Indians broke camp and scattered.

It was on the following day, June 27th, while General Terry's men were performing the last sad rites for their slaughtered comrades on the Custer battlefield, that Lieutenant H. I. Nowlan, field quartermaster on General Terry's staff, discovered Comanche wandering aimlessly about on the battlefield, wounded almost unto death, and so weak and emaciated that it was at first deemed the wise and humane thing to shoot the horse and put him out of his misery. Seven bullets had pierced the animal's body, yet the poor creature had clung tenaciously to life. Nowlan had been an intimate friend of Captain Keogh, and he immediately determined to save Comanche if such a thing were possible.

The badly wounded horse was tenderly conveyed to the steamer "Far West", lying at the junction of the Big and Little Horn Rivers, some fifteen miles



"COMANCHE", THE HORSE RIDDEN BY CAPT. MYLES W. KEOGH IN THE LITTLE BIG HORN FIGHT, AND THE ONLY LIVING THING WHICH ESCAPED. ALTHOUGH WOUNDED SEVEN TIMES, HE SURVIVED, AND LIVED TO BE 28 YEARS OF AGE.

from the battlefield. Here a comfortable stall was erected on the boat and everything possible done to make the animal's journey as easy as conditions would permit. Comanche's wounds were probed and he was most tenderly nursed on the down trip, being given as much attention as any of the wounded men.

Arriving at Bismarck, Comanche was conveyed across the river to Fort Abraham Lincoln, the post from which Custer and the Seventh Cavalry had so proudly and gallantly marched away just five weeks previously. Here the animal rapidly recovered.

There is a story told to the effect that after recovering from his wounds, Comanche was in great demand by the ladies at the post as a riding horse, and that great rivalry arose among them as to which should be awarded the honor of riding him. On several occasions, so goes the story, when riding parties went out from Fort Lincoln, considerable jealousy arose, which reached such a point that Colonel Sturgis, post commander, flatly refused to allow Comanche to again be ridden by anyone.

However, another story — doubtless the more correct one — is that Comanche never was ridden by anyone after the Custer fight, but that after he had recovered from his wounds sufficiently to be turned out to run as he willed, Colonel Sturgis issued the following order:

"Headquarters Seventh U. S. Cavalry,
Fort A. Lincoln, D. T.,
April 10, 1878.

"GENERAL ORDERS NO. 7:

(1) — The horse known as "Comanche", being the only living representative of the bloody tragedy of the Little Big

Horn, June 25, 1876, his kind treatment and comfort shall be a matter of special pride and solicitude on the part of every member of the Seventh Cavalry, to the end that his life shall be preserved to the utmost limit. Wounded and scarred as he is, his very existence speaks in terms more eloquent than words, of the desperate struggle against overwhelming numbers of the hopeless conflict, and the heroic manner in which all went down on that fatal day.

(2) — The commanding officer of Company I will see that a special and comfortable stall is fitted up for him, and he will not again be ridden by any person whatsoever, under any circumstances, nor will he ever be put to any kind of work.

(3) — Hereafter, upon all occasions of ceremony of mounted regimental formation, Comanche, saddled, bridled and draped in mourning, and led by a mounted trooper of Company I, will be paraded by the regiment.

By command of Colonel Sturgis.

E. A. GARLINGTON,

First lieutenant and adjt. Seventh Cavalry.

When the Seventh Cavalry was ordered to Fort Riley, Kansas, Comanche was taken along, and for many years the noble animal received the tenderest care it was possible to give him. In the winter of 1891 or '92, however, when Comanche was 28 years old, a fatal illness seized him, and he died, in spite of the best of expert treatment.

Comanche's death was sincerely mourned by the entire regiment and the officers of the Seventh Cavalry determined to have the body of the beloved animal mounted and preserved.

Prof. Dyche, a naturalist connected with the University of Kansas, at Lawrence, made a proposition to the officers of the regiment to mount Comanche for \$400, the officers to retain the mounted body, or

he would mount the animal if presented to the State university, at no expense to the Seventh Cavalry.

Captain Nowlan called the officers together to decide the matter. As the regiment was changing stations more or less, and they had no way of transporting the mounted pet from place to place, it was decided to present the body to the Kansas University.

Prof. Dyche, therefore, took the body of Comanche to Lawrence and mounted it in a very creditable manner. It was on exhibition at the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893, where it was viewed by hundreds of thousands of persons.

In a letter some time ago to the author from the dean of the University of Kansas, he stated that the body of Comanche still stands in the museum, looking as lifelike as ever.

In the words of General E. S. Godfrey, "Comanche still lives".

CHAPTER XI

CHARLEY REYNOLDS, CUSTER'S CHIEF OF SCOUTS

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF ONE OF THE GREAT FRONTIERSMEN OF THE '70'S.

THE American youth of this day and age, who reads the stories of life in what was known as the "Far West" 45 and 50 years ago, has formed in his mind a conception of the appearance of the "scouts of the plains", and they are generally likened somewhat in this fashion:

A picturesque figure, dressed from head to foot in fringed buckskin, with wide sombrero, long hair, an eagle eye, a belt full of murderous bowies and revolvers and a thirst for Indian blood.

There *were* quite a few of that sort. Some of them drifted into the Wild West show business after the Indian had accepted the inevitable and become a reservation ward of Uncle Sam. Generally speaking, however, such specimens of the frontier were loud in proclaiming their own prowess; ever ready for newspaper notoriety, and were their own best press agents.

But the men who "did the business", who were the most reliable scouts, trailers, guides, hunters and plainsmen were chary of notoriety, avoided publicity, cared nothing for public praise and detested anything that smacked of braggadocio. And as a

rule, they did not wear buckskin nor affect long hair.

Among this latter class was the subject of this sketch, Charles Alexander Reynolds, one of the bravest, most modest, unassuming and best-loved of all the plainsmen of the '70's, who met a tragic death with Reno's command in the battle of the Little Big Horn, June 25, 1876.

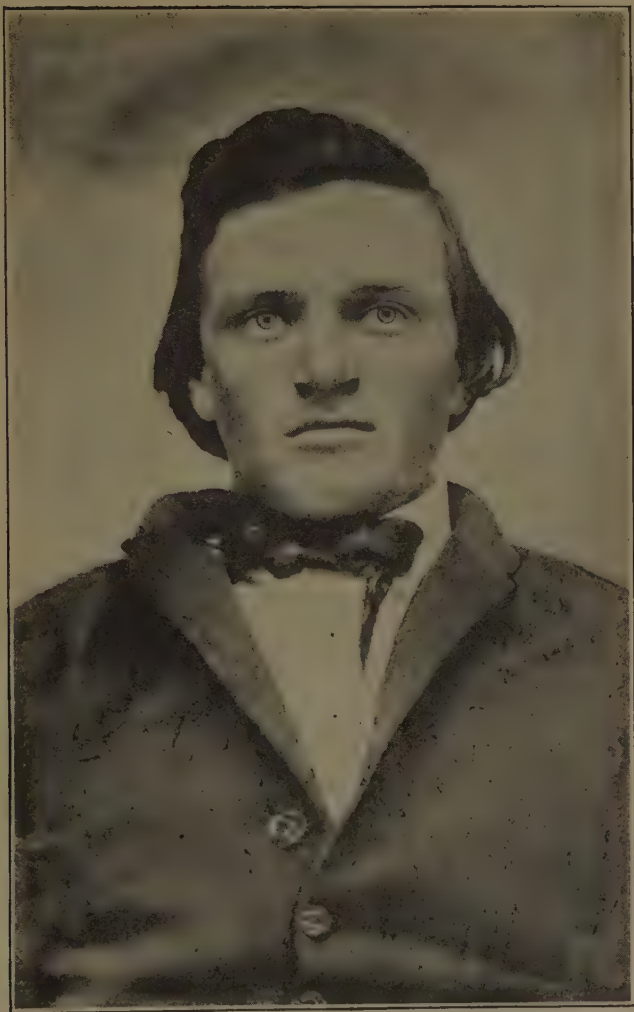
Reynolds' fame as a hunter and scout was second to none among all the noted plainsmen of his time — indeed his prowess as a slayer of big game was marvelous, and the Indians looked upon him with awe and admiration, believing that he had supernatural aid on his hunts, as he would bring in game from sections of the country where their best hunters failed.

E. W. Howe, well known as the former editor of the Atchison (Kan.) *Globe* has this to say of Charley Reynolds:

"He was always a quiet man, and little could be learned of his exploits in the West. His disposition to say little caused the nickname of 'Lonesome Charley' to be given him, and it stuck. After he left home, in 1865, at rare intervals he sent his brother, William Reynolds, newspaper clippings. From one of these it was learned that he acted as guide for the Grand Duke Alexis during his memorable hunt in this country; also that he was employed at intervals as a Government scout.

"He never married. His brother says he used to talk of a girl he knew in New Mexico. He was possibly on his way to see her when attacked by the Indians, his partner killed and his outfit captured.

" 'Lonesome Charley' spent twelve years on the



CHARLEY REYNOLDS — FROM AN OLD PHOTO SHOWING THE NOTED SCOUT AS A YOUNG MAN. PHOTO COURTESY L. N. REYNOLDS, ATCHISON, KANSAS, NEPHEW OF CHARLEY REYNOLDS

Plains and in the mountains, and yet little is known of him, except that he had the reputation of being a silent man, of great bravery, unusual sense and unimpeachable character. At intervals he would appear at army posts, remain awhile, and then drift away, no one knew where, except that it was known he had no partners; he hunted and trapped alone. When a campaign against the Indians was forming, his services were always in demand as a scout. When a notable person appeared on the frontier for a hunt, 'Lonesome Charley' was secured as a guide when he could be found. He was a noted character, but no one knew much about him; he had no intimates. For months he lived alone in the mountains, hunting and trapping. Romances have been written about him; about his disappointment in love, which led to his melancholy disposition. One story relates that he was engaged to be married to a southern beauty—but this is all romance. His brother says he never heard him mention any woman in connection with love, except the girl in New Mexico, and this was probably no more than a boyish fancy, a slight acquaintance. 'Lonesome Charley' was quiet as a boy.

"Dr. Reynolds, the father of 'Lonesome Charley', died in 1868. In 1901 there were two sisters of Charley Reynolds living in Valley Falls, Kansas—Mrs. Lydia Hogan and Mrs. Malinda Allen.

"When 'Lonesome Charley' returned to Atchison County in 1861, he crossed the Plains alone. He early began the habit of being solitary—not because he was morose or disappointed, but because he was by nature a silent man."

Charley Reynolds and Capt. Grant Marsh, master of the steamboat "Far West", were firm friends. Joseph Mills Hanson, author of "The Conquest of the Missouri", has this to say of the great friendship between Capt. Marsh and Reynolds:

"Reynolds was charr'y of speech, seeming even surly on slight acquaintance, though such was not the case, for his disposition was cheerful and his generosity such that he would hesitate at no sacrifice for a friend. As a scout his services were of great value to the expedition, and the slaughter he wrought among the wild animals of the country caused continual astonishment to the soldiery, whom his rifle kept supplied with such a variety of choice game as would have tickled the palate of an epicure. The friendship existing between Capt. Marsh and 'Lonesome Charley' was close and warm, and it continued up to the day when the brave scout, after passing through countless dangers, laid down his life in the service of his country, and in the midst of the wild land which had so long been his home."

One of Reynolds's most intimate friends was Capt. Edward Allison, a noted scout and government interpreter, who had married into the Sioux tribe. In a letter to a friend in Potter, Kansas, written Dec. 30, 1913, he gives his recollections of 'Lonesome Charley'.

"I met Charley Reynolds for the first time in 1873, when I joined Custer at Yankton, S. D., as interpreter, and accompanied him in that capacity on the long march up the Missouri Valley to Fort Rice. Charley was Custer's chief scout. Every day we rode side by side, and at night our tents

touched elbows. We prepared our meals over one campfire, and one set of cooking utensils answered for both.

"In 1875 I was employed as interpreter and chief of scouts at Fort Yates, thirty-five miles below Fort Rice, near the Standing Rock Indian agency. Fort Abraham Lincoln had been built, in the meantime, and there, opposite Bismarck, and twenty-two miles above Fort Rice, Custer was stationed, with Charley Reynolds still his chief of scouts. I had occasion frequently to visit Fort Lincoln, carrying dispatches between the posts, and I always stayed over night with Charley.

"Late that summer I was ordered by Gen. Carlin to proceed post haste to Bismarck and secure certain official papers which I would find on the person of one Eugene Waldorf, an employe of the agent at Standing Rock. My orders were that if he refused to surrender the papers, I should bring him, a prisoner, to Fort Yates, and if I needed help I would be assisted by Gen. Custer.

"I reached Lincoln in the dusk of the evening. I borrowed 'Lonesome Charley', and immediately we crossed over to Bismarck. We found Waldorf with Tom Fortune, city marshal, and a few others of the gang of toughs that ruled Bismarck in those days, at the Red Chimney, a sporting house. I demanded the papers, and Waldorf handed them over without a word, but at this moment the city marshal, backed by the gang, threatened me with arrest for robbery. He had hardly opened his mouth when 'Lonesome' had him covered. Briefly, he made him get down on his hands and knees, disarmed him, and then drove the whole crowd up-

stairs and locked the stairway door. Then we quietly mounted our horses and rode back to the ferry and crossed again to Fort Lincoln. I was back in Fort Yates before daylight.

"I saw Charley two or three times that winter, and last when they were organizing in the spring of '76 for that awful march down the valley of death."

In Polson, Montana, lives Charles Edwin Reynolds, a nephew of the noted Charley Reynolds. In a letter to the author dated October 29th, 1925, Mr. Reynolds relates the following facts regarding his noted uncle:

"Part of the winter and spring of 1867 he spent at the home of my father, William Reynolds, three miles south of Pardee, Kansas. I was born in February of that year, and Uncle Charley left for the West in April. I had not been given a name at the time he was getting ready to leave. My mother has often told me that the day before he left, much of his attention was given to me. That day he asked my parents to allow him to give me a name. They consented, and he gave me the name of Charles Edwin Reynolds. He never liked his own middle name (Alexander). He was a great admirer of Edwin M. Stanton, who had been secretary of war throughout the Rebellion.

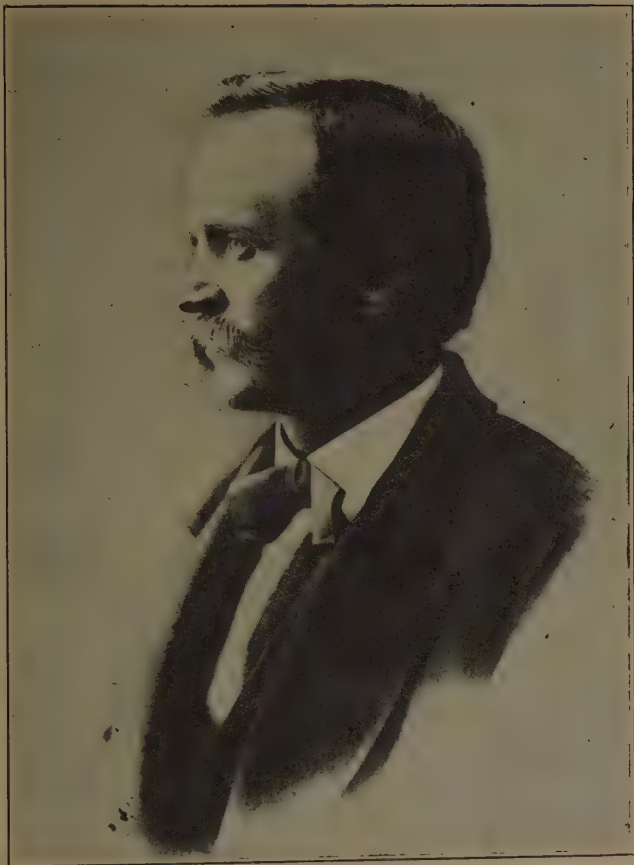
"When Uncle Charley left this time he never returned, and so far as we know, none of his relatives ever saw him again. He told them he expected to make money in the West, and should not return until he had enough to keep him comfortably. If he

accumulated anything in the way of money or valuables, none of his relatives ever learned of it.

"I am sure there never was any mystery about him or of his going West, nor was it on account of any disagreement with his family. It has been suggested by some who have written about him that he went West because of disappointment over a love affair, but his folks never actually knew that he was intrigued or in any way influenced by Cupid. He was very quiet, but not morose. On the other hand, he was quite genial, and a good conversationalist when interested, was well informed on current affairs, and better educated than most young men of his time. He was a real student of nature, had a keen eye and nothing escaped his notice. He was an expert horseman, and could almost instantly know a horse's disposition and ability by looking him over. I heard my father say that Charley could ride and conquer any horse, and father knew more about horses than any man I have ever known.

"His discharge papers, from service during the Civil War, were not recovered until several years after his death. A gentleman who gave his address as some place in Minnesota, advertised in the National Tribune that he had in his possession the discharge papers of one Charles A. Reynolds. Father wrote to him at once and soon received the discharge with a letter, in which the man stated that a friend of his had found it in an old satchel near some military post, the name of which I have forgotten.

"The first news we had of the Custer battle was from the Chicago papers, a copy of which was given my father by a friend and neighbor, Alexander



CHARLEY REYNOLDS.

CUSTER'S CHIEF OF SCOUTS, ON HIS LAST EXPEDITION. KILLED
IN RENO'S FIGHT IN THE RIVER BOTTOM. PHOTO BY D. F.
BARRY.

Riley. I have never forgotten, although then a small boy, the look of agony on father's face as his eye ran down the casualty list and he reached the name of Charley Reynolds.

"After this, father received a letter from Major Reno, telling him Uncle Charley had been wounded, killed his horse and fought behind its body as long as he had ammunition, or until killed. He said there were many empty shells and dead Indians near his body, which was naked when found, having been stripped by the Indians. I am sure he was buried under the big monument erected on the battlefield, and his name appears on the monument.

"A bronze tablet upon which his name appears, has been placed at the spot where he was killed. I expect to attend the 50th anniversary celebration of the battle next June."

Some twenty-eight years ago, James H. Taylor, then a well known newspaperman of the Dakotas, but prior to that time a hunter and trapper of considerable fame, wrote a most interesting western volume, entitled "Frontier and Indian Life". The book has been out of print and extremely rare for many years. From a copy owned by the author is gathered the following regarding Charley Reynolds and his early life on the frontier:

"One day in the early summer of 1870, there appeared at the lower Painted Woods of the then territory of Dakota, a young man about 24 years of age, swinging a Sharps rifle of 44 caliber over his shoulder, and leading a pony in pack. He unostentatiously gave his name as Charley Reynolds, and his occupation that of a professional huntsman.

"This young man was about five feet eight inches

in height, heavy-set and somewhat round-shouldered. He had a pair of keen gray eyes, habituated to a restless, penetrating look, with rather unsociable, noncommunicative habit. His voice was soft in expression — almost feminine — and, what was more unusual among lovers of the border, he used no tobacco in any form, nor was he ever seen by his companions under the influence of intoxicating liquor.

“He had passed the previous winter around the old Grand River agency, and at Gayton’s ranch, on the east bank of the Missouri River, nearly opposite the Standing Rock. In the early spring he moved up near Fort Rice, and while there, displayed first his remarkable gifts as a hunter that made him so much notoriety along the Upper Missouri country.

“He contracted with the post commissary to supply the garrison at Fort Rice with all the fresh meat needed at the post. His fame as a successful hunter spreading up the river, the officers of Fort Stevenson also requested him to furnish that post in like manner.

“It was while hunting in the Painted Woods that ‘Reynolds’ luck’ became a word of widespread familiarity among envious hunters, and varied studied expressions were indulged in by disappointed nimrods who could explain their own disappointment as being game stalkers decidedly out of luck.

“Reynolds’ intuitive knowledge of the habits of wild animals, such as elk, antelope and deer, were marvelous, and could only have been gained by a very close study of the habits of those animals. He would very often say he would kill a deer or elk feeding at a certain place on a certain kind of herb

or vine at a certain hour of the day; and he would almost invariably return from the hunt with a token of the accomplishment of his promise.

"The large amount of game killed by the solitary rifle of this extraordinary hunter became a subject of much discussion among the neighboring Indian tribes, who, to a certain extent, depended for food upon the very game which Reynolds was killing. The feeling particularly grew upon the Indians of the Fort Berthold agency, many of whom were themselves good hunters; but Reynolds so far eclipsed them all that they believed he was 'heap big medicine', and possessed of unknown supernatural powers.

"The climax to the Indians' patience and forbearance was finally exhausted in the matter during the winter of 1874, when Reynolds started out from Fort Berthold on an elk hunt along the Little Missouri River, taking along as companion for the trip one Peter Buchamp, a half-breed Arickaree. At the mouth of Cherry Creek they came upon a herd of eight elk, and Reynolds killed them all without scarcely changing his position.

"After dressing them, they loaded as much of the meat on the wagon as it would hold, and then, 'caching' the balance against wolves, they returned to the agency. Buchamp was an intelligent half-breed, and disposed to play, at times, on the credulity of his red brothers. He half believed himself that Reynolds had some magic charm whereby he brought the game within reach.

"After his return from this hunt, Buchamp related to the Indians a wonderful story about the 'White-Hunter-Who-Never-Goes-Out - For-Nothing,'

which name the Indians had bestowed upon Reynolds. Buchamp detailed to the Indians the story of finding the tracks of the elk. He then said that as soon as Reynolds had assured himself that the trail was fresh, he had taken from an inner pocket a black bottle, and poured out some of the contents along the trail. He then sat down on a log for the course of an hour or so, when every elk in the band returned in its own tracks, and Reynolds had nothing to do but shoot them down!

"As might have been expected, this story aroused the jealous, famine-haunted savages to a pitch of superstitious fury. Reynolds, all unconscious of the gathering storm, was resting quietly at Trader Malnorie's house. Suddenly the place was surrounded by about two hundred Gros Ventres. The yelling Indians demanded that Reynolds give up the black bottle—that source of all the mischief, and the cause, so they supposed, of this decimation of the wild game thereabouts. The refusal of the bottle was death.

"Reynolds, of course, denied possession of any such magic charm, and some of the Indians drew their knives and made a rush for his team, hitched close by, with the evident intent of cutting the throats of his horses. Reynolds leveled his rifle at the mob, with the remark that the first Indian who touched a horse was a dead man. The aim of his well-known deadly gun had its effect, and the Indians slunk away."

At this point of his story, Taylor branches off into some of Reynold's early life history:

"Charley Reynolds was born in Warren County,

Ill., March 20, 1844.* His father was a physician with an extensive practice, and a man of fine mental attainments. During the last years of the residence of the Reynolds family in Illinois, Charley attended Abbington College. Just what started him out into the wild West is not certain, but at about the age of 16 he joined an emigrant train for California.

"Near the Platte River they were attacked by Indians. Some escaped, among them being Charley Reynolds. At Fort Kearney, Nebraska, the boy fell in with an old trapper named Green, who lived on an island in the Platte. But the habits of the old man bordered too much on the cannibal for the lad. One day the trapper found an Indian body in a tree, where the tribe had buried it in accordance with their usual custom. He shook the corpse down and used it for wolf bait. That capped the climax for Reynolds, and he departed in haste, Fort Laramie being his destination.

"Soon the great Civil War broke out, and Reynolds returned east and enlisted in a Kansas regiment. He served three years in the conflict, the greater part of the time being on scouting duty.

"After the war, he returned to Atchison County, Kansas, where he remained until the following summer, when he started out with a trader named Walmsley, with a load of goods, bound for south-

*There is some dispute as to the place and date of birth of Charley Reynolds. E. W. Howe, in the Atchison (Kan.) Globe names, Stevensburg, Hardin Co., Ky., as the place, and 1842 the year. C. E. Reynolds of Polson, Mont., nephew of the scout, says his uncle was born in Elizabeth, Ky., in 1841.



SITTING BULL, NOTED SIOUX MEDICINE MAN. PHOTO BY
D. F. BARRY.

western Kansas. Near the Smoky Hill they were attacked by Indians and the trader was killed. Reynolds took shelter in a wolfer's dugout, where he stood the savages off until night fall. Then in the darkness he crept out and wriggled through the Indian line, making his way, by easy stages, down to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

'Here, it is stated, he fell in love with a pretty senorita and married her. It was a case, however, so the story goes, of 'too much mother-in-law', and Reynolds finally quit the quarelsome home, and made his way back across the plains.

"During the summer of '66, Reynolds was hunting buffalo on the headwaters of the Republican. Hostile Indians kept him constantly on the lookout, and he had many narrow escapes. Not feeling justified in longer risking his scalp, Reynolds crossed over to Jack Morrow's ranch on the Platte — a well known spot in that day, where he remained through the winter, during which time he got into a difficulty with an army officer at Fort McPherson. Reynolds was a peaceable man, and never started a quarrel, but would not brook an insult. The officer made an unprovoked attack upon him, and when the smoke of battle had cleared away, was minus an arm.

"In the summer of '73, the Northern Pacific Railroad was surveyed up the Yellowstone Valley. General Stanley was sent with a force of men to protect them, and Reynolds accompanied the expedition as scout. In '74, when Custer made his famous exploration of the Black Hills, Charley Reynolds was selected as the best man for chief scout and guide. This was the most important reconnaissance yet

undertaken into the Sioux country. It was on this trip that Custer and Reynolds became so firmly attached to each other — a friendship which lasted during the remainder of their lives.

"The survey lasted all summer, and Reynolds had ample opportunity to prove his skill as a hunter, scout and guide. Always on the danger line, he proved his mettle in numerous skirmishes with the Indians.

"After Custer had entered the Black Hills, and gold was found, it became necessary to communicate the important news to the outside world. The greatest danger attended the carrying of it. The country everywhere was swarming with hostile Indians. Custer asked for a volunteer dispatch-bearer from his command to carry the news to Fort Laramie, over 150 miles distant. Nobody seemed in a hurry to undertake the task. Reynolds was sitting on a log near by, and as there were no volunteers, he quietly remarked:

" 'I'll go, General.' "

"Custer objected. He needed Reynolds with the command, but the latter insisted upon going, and Custer reluctantly consented. When questioned as to how much of an escort he desired, Reynolds said he preferred going alone. He was given the best horse in the command, and after darkness had settled down, the intrepid scout started out. Two day later he rode up to the gates of Fort Laramie with his dispatches, and soon thereafter the civilized world was informed that gold had been found in the Black Hills, which started a stampede at once in that direction.

"Reynolds' fame as a guide spread rapidly.

Hunting parties from the East, tourists from abroad, army officers and college professors in scientific research, all engaged Reynolds, because he was a man of intelligence, with a taste for scientific matters, and he was a general favorite with all. The fauna and flora and geological formations were familiar to him. He became a devoted student and admirer of both the botanist and naturalist, and was in correspondence with some of the leading men in eastern universities on subjects that were dear to him.

"During Custer's expedition of 1873 there accompanied the command a Dr. Honzinger, the veterinary surgeon of the 7th Cavalry, and a Mr. Balleran, the sutler. They were men of scientific tastes, and often left the command to search for fossils. On one of these trips they were overtaken by Reynolds who warned them to return at once to the command, as he had just discovered fresh Indian signs. The men delayed, and were soon attacked and both killed and horribly mutilated.

"During the early part of the following winter, Custer sent Reynolds out on a scout. He attended a sun-dance of the Sioux, at which he overheard a young warrior known as Rain-in-the-Face boast of having personally killed both the veterinarian and the sutler. Obtaining further particulars, Reynolds at once sent word to Custer, who immediately ordered his brother, Captain Tom Custer, to arrest the Indian braggart and bring him to Fort Abraham Lincoln, headquarters of the 7th Cavalry.

"This was accomplished after Reynolds had pointed out the reputed murderer. The arrest was attended by considerable danger, but was successfully done. Rain-in-the-Face was taken to the

guardhouse, from which he escaped in a few months, and made his way to the hostile camps along the Yellowstone, swearing eternal vengeance against Tom Custer.

"When it became known, early in the spring of 1876, that an expedition was to be sent out against the hostiles, believed to be holding forth in the Big Horn country, Custer tendered Reynolds the position of chief guide of the expedition. The object of the undertaking was to compel all Indians to move onto reservations which the Government had set apart for them.

"Custer himself was not of the opinion that the warring Sioux would offer much resistance when faced by military power; but Charley Reynolds gave it as his opinion that the Sioux would fight, and fight hard. He stated that he had observed the preparations which had been going on for some time; that they had been supplying themselves with plenty of ammunition and repeating rifles. He further stated that he believed the summer of 1876 would witness the greatest Indian battle ever fought upon this continent."

The world knows what a truthful prophecy was this declaration of Charley Reynolds. Little did Custer or Reynolds realize, however, that it would be their last Indian fight.

The battle of the Little Big Horn, or "Custer's last fight", as it is perhaps more generally called, is an item of American frontier history which has been attended by more speculation and surmising than any battle that ever occurred in all the Indian warfare of the West. When Custer divided his

forces on that fatal June 25th, 1876, Charley Reynolds was detailed to accompany Major Reno's battalion, together with Billy Jackson, a half-breed scout, Fred F. Girard, an interpreter, Bloody Knife, Custer's favorite Arickaree Indian scout, and others of the 'Rees.

Let us now return to Taylor's narrative:

"It was in the earlier part of this fight with the Reno battalion that Charley Reynolds went down to his death. When the Indians were making a flanking assault, with the evident intention of cutting Reno's command in two parts, Charley Reynolds was standing not far from where Dr. H. R. Porter, one of the surgeons of the 7th Cavalry, was attending a dying soldier. The doctor was wearing a linen duster, and Reynolds, unmindful of his own danger, shouted to him:

"'Look out, doctor, the Indians are shooting at you!'

"These were Reynolds' last words. A few minutes, after fighting furiously against the swarming hordes of savages that poured out against them, the daring scout was shot and instantly killed. That he died fighting is testified to from the fact that over sixty empty cartridge shells were found beside his body, the headless trunk of which was discovered two or three days later, when Gen. Terry's troops took possession of the field to bury the dead."

At this point, the Taylor narrative states that Reynolds' body was afterward reinterred by a professor of Ann Arbor University near the site of that Michigan institution. This is an error, as the

author tried in vain to verify it. Correspondence with the Ann Arbor authorities gave no light upon the matter, the dean of the college stating that Reynolds was not buried near Ann Arbor University, and that there must be some mistake in such a statement. Further correspondence with Supt. Asbury of Crow Agency, Montana, near the battlefield, brought out the information that Reynolds' body was buried on the side of the river on which the Reno forces fought, and that the site had been appropriately marked.

Since the foregoing was written, information has been received from Supt. C. H. Asbury at Crow Agency as follows:

"DEAR MR. BRININSTOOL: I stated that Charley Reynolds' grave and burial site was not exactly known, but in harking back, it occurred to me that it had recently been marked with an iron tablet (about 1920), and I wrote to the custodian of the battlefield to find out if I was correct in my surmise, and I find I was. Reynolds' body was buried with the unrecognized dead under the battle monument on the top of Custer Hill, so I am informed. The spot where he was shot and killed is about one mile southeast of the present railroad station of Garryowen, along the Burlington Railroad, which runs close to the battlefield, within a mile or so."

One of the finest testimonials to the character of Charley Reynolds is given by Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, widow of the general, now living in New York City. In her interesting volume, "Boots and Saddles", she says:

"I wish I could recall more about the curious characters among us. Most of them had some strange

history in the States that had been the cause of their seeking the wild life of the frontier. The one whose past we would have liked best to know was a man most valued by my husband. All the important scoutings and most difficult missions, where secrecy was required, were entrusted to him. We had no certain knowledge whether he had any family or friends anywhere, for he never spoke of them. He acknowledged once, in a brief moment of confidence, that he was a gentleman by birth. Startled, perhaps, by the look of curiosity that even a friend's face showed, he turned the conversation and said, 'Oh, what's the use to refer to it now?'

"We did not even know whether Charley Reynolds was his real name, or one he had assumed. Soon after we reached Dakota, the general began to employ him as a scout. He remained with him much of the time until he fell in the battle of the Little Big Horn. My husband had such genuine admiration for him that I soon learned to listen to everything pertaining to his life with marked interest. He was so shy that he hardly raised his eyes when I extended my hand at the general's introduction. He did not assume the picturesque dress—the long hair, the belt full of weapons, that are characteristic of the scout. His manner was perfectly simple and straightforward, and he could not be induced to talk about himself. He had large dark blue eyes and a frank face. I have known him to start out from Fort Lincoln when even our officers, accustomed as they are to hardships, were forbidden to go. Year after year he braved the awful winters of Dakota alone. He had been the

best shot and the most successful hunter in the territory for fifteen years.

"The year that the regiment explored the Black Hills, Charley Reynolds undertook to carry dispatches through to Fort Laramie, over 150 miles distant. He had only his compass to guide him, for there were no trails. The country was infested with Indians, and he could only travel at night. During the day he hid his horse as well as he could in the underbrush, and lay down in the tall grass. In spite of these precautions he was sometimes so exposed that he could hear the voices of Indians passing near. The last nights of his march he was compelled to walk, as his horse was exhausted, and he found no water for hours. His lips became so parched and his throat so swollen that he could not close his mouth. In this condition he reached Fort Laramie and delivered his dispatches. It was from the people of the post that the general heard of his narrow escape. He came quietly back to his post at Fort Lincoln, and only confessed to his dangers when closely questioned by the general long afterward.

"When I think how gloriously he fell fighting for his country, with all the valor and fidelity of one of her own officers, my eyes fill with tears. He lies there on that battlefield unwept, unhonored and unsung. Had he worn all the insignia of the high rank and the decorations of an adoring country, he could not have led a braver life or died a more heroic death; yet he is chronicled as 'only a scout'.

Thus passed out one of the West's great sons. Others may have won greater newspaper or maga-

zine notoriety, but Charley Reynolds was not that sort. His quiet, unassuming manner endeared him to the hearts of all his associates, while his skill and fame as a mighty hunter, and his keen, intelligent insight as a scout and guide has been indellibly inscribed in Western history as a "top-notcher" in frontiersmanship.

Traplines ^{and} Trails

A Real Trapping Book for the Experienced and Inexperienced Trapper

Some of the latest methods of trapping and handling of the fur-bearers will be found in this book. It is fully illustrated throughout with actual scenes taken on the trail and trap-line.

The author, E. J. Dailey, has been a trapper many years in the Adirondack Mountains and is well versed in outdoor pursuits.

The book contains upwards of 200 pages, 54 illustrations and is cloth bound, size 5¼x 7½ inches. Price, only \$1.00, prepaid.

HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER

Columbus, Ohio, U. S. A.

The Wilderness Trapper

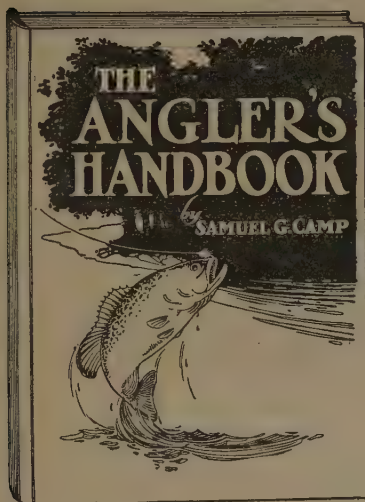
A manual on trapping, by Raymond Thompson, who has spent many years on the wilderness trapline. There are sixteen chapters of practical information on trapping, instructive and interesting. A valuable guide book. Some of the chapters are on: Outfitting the Wilderness Trapper; The Grub Stake; Getting Ready for the Fur Harvest; Fox Trapping; War on Wolves; Beaver Trapping; The Lynx; Marten and Fisher Trapping; The Bear Family; Muskrat; Tracks and Tracking; Grading Furs; Caring for Steel Traps; Firearms and Snowshoes, etc.

This interesting book contains 226 pages, with numerous pictures and drawings of sets and tracks. Cloth bound, only \$1.00.

HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER,
Columbus, Ohio, U. S. A.

Fishermen All!

*You want a copy
of "Sam" Camp's
New Book*



Send \$1.00 only

A SOUND BOOK BY AN AUTHORITY

Mr. Camp has been a nationally recognized authority on angling for nearly twenty years. This is his latest and best book—a practical handbook, covering all essential phases of fresh-water fishing. Written in his usual entertaining style. Fully illustrated, from photographs and drawings. Over 200 pages.

PUBLISHED BY

**THE HUNTER - TRADER - TRAPPER COMPANY
COLUMBUS, OHIO, U. S. A.**

Part of Contents

Fly Tackle for Trout and Bass.

Fly rods—Selecting the fly rod—The fly rod for bass—Steel fly rods—Care of rods—The fly casting reel—The fly casting line—Leaders—Dry and wet fly terminal tackle—Advantages of the single fly—Trout flies—Fly books and boxes—Bass flies—Fly rod lures for bass and trout.

Trout and Trout Fishing Methods.

Fly casting—Wet fly fishing—The dry fly method—Pan fishing with dry fly—Early fly fishing—Striking, playing and landing—Worm fishing for trout.

Bait Casting for Bass and Others: Fly Rod Fishing.

Casting rods—Casting reels—Lines—Bait casting and casting baits (How to cast; habits of bass and other game fish; casting lures; etc.)—Playing and landing—Practical hints—Fly rod fishing.

Trolling; Still Fishing; Pan Fishing.

Trolling tackle, baits and methods—How to distinguish pike, pickerel and muskellunge—Still fishing tackle and methods—Pan fishing—How to distinguish the rock bass, calico bass and crappie—Tackle—"Perch bugs"—Where to fish—Trolling and casting.

Hunter-Trader-Trapper

*The Largest Outdoor Magazine of Its
Kind in the World*

Fully illustrated with photos of actual happenings on the trap line, in the field, along the lakes and streams, etc. From 96 to 160 pages in each issue, every page full of human interest. Published every month in the year.

If you have never seen a copy, send us 25c and we will be glad to forward one, post-paid. A whole year only \$2.00.

HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER,
Dept. M Columbus, Ohio, U. S. A.

Cooning With Cooners

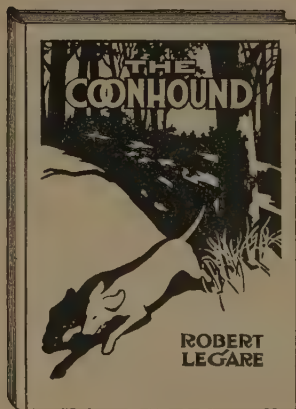
Packed With Real Coon Hunting Experiences. Illustrated From Typical Photographs

A favorite book for every coon hunter. Compiled by O. Kuechler, Editor of Hunter-Trader-Trapper, and containing many interesting stories of actual coon hunts with coon hunting dogs. Stories similar to those published monthly in the Coon Hunting Department of H-T-T. This book should be in the home of every lover of the sport.

Cloth bound, 217 pages.
Price \$1.00.

HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER,
Columbus, Ohio, U. S. A.

A Book on the Coon Hound, — Exclusively —



"Training a Coonhound," presenting right methods to meet various conditions; "Proper Breeding," facts you should know and be guided by to get the best results. "Care of Puppies" from birth to doghood, also what and when to feed them; "Cross Breeding" and the results usually obtained; "Inbreeding" defined and its results explained;

"Dog Diseases," their causes, cures and prevention; "The Glossary", defining the anatomy of a dog and explaining terms used with reference to the chase.

Cloth bound, $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$, 160 pages, good readable type, fully illustrated with interesting pictures from different sections of the country. Price only \$1.00 prepaid.

HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER

COLUMBUS, OHIO, U. S. A.



P9-EBX-884

